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King Arthur and the Table Round

In Two Volumes

Volume One

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King Arthur and the Table Round

Tales chiefly after the Old French of Crestien of Troyes with an Account of Arthurian Romance, and Notes by William Wells Newell

In two Volumes

Volume One

A. P. WATT & SON
Hastings House
NORFOLK STREET, STRAND
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Minstrel, thy lay responded to the brightness
That banished phantoms of the dark forlorn,
When France, white churches wearing like a mantle,
Received the gladness of a gentle morn;
Rude cries of war and feudal hate were chidden,
For love of melody sincere and strange
As singing-birds of the enchanted forest,
And blithe as verdure of its April change.

Thine were the woods, where safely Spenser journeyed,
Where Dante pleased awhile to tent and dwell,
Till twilight-lost in the forsaken valley,
He found no issue save the path through Hell.
More cheerful thou, from castle to gray castle
Didst rove content upon a lonely way,
On either side beholding the black moorland,
Or leafy sunshine of the summer day.

In that same wilderness Enidè suffered,
To earn by courage cherishing again;
About her faithful quest Lunetta wandered,
And heart-sick, toward her rescue rode Ewain.
Before the knight, divine in gold and azure,
With claspèd hands knelt Perceval the fair,
And naked pilgrims, from their shrift returning,
In kindness signed the path conducting there.

Where charity and courtesy are harbored,
Along the border bloometh Arthur's land;
Silken and scarlet glimmer his pavilions,
While green as Arden grows Broceliande.
From home by thee undreamed, far over ocean,
Where long may olive bury sword and sheath,
Of thine immortal flowers the garland woven,
Be offered, Christian, this memorial wreath.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *April*, 1897.

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Arthurian Romance

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Literature and Tradition

FOR Arthurian story English readers are disposed to entertain that affection which is engendered by a sense of proprietorship. The names of Camelot and Caerleon, Carlisle and Cardigan, Lothian and Galloway, appear to set on the narrative the stamp of the soil. In Cornwall, Wales, and Scotland, traditions of Arthur and his Round Table are so closely associated with the landscape that visitors receive the impression of ancient memory, and cease to question the foundation of the legend; amid appropriate scenery, fiction assumes the air of history. To local interest is added a racial significance. Arthur and Guinevere, Gawain and Kay, seem to represent that earliest component of the population whose language survives in Wales, but whose characteristics have been submerged beneath the successive waves of later immigration. Of the original Briton we know little, and would gladly learn more; it has been considered that Arthurian tales, rightly interpreted, may serve for illumination. The distinguishing features of these narratives, widely differing from previous types, have been taken to represent a Cymric inheritance; their gayety and gentleness, their fanciful and adventurous

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spirit, have been regarded as the contribution of Celtic vivacity, enlivening the slower mental processes of graver races. It is still held that the fundamental conceptions belonged to Cymric folk-tales, which from Wales or Brittany passed into the hands of romancers, who bestowed a courtly form of expression which did not involve forfeiture of their quality.

Without regard to obscure problems relating to ultimate sources, it may be affirmed that such doctrine is not justified by the nature of existing narratives. For the romance as it has come down to modern time, neither history nor tradition is primarily responsible; from first to last, these tales are literary products; the reader is in the realm of fiction, proceeding according to methods of the novelist. However provincial recollection may appear to confer authority on the incidents, such afterglow is the reflection of letters, not the twilight of unwritten memory. Nor has inherited disposition much to do with the matter. The Briton has played but a small part in the construction of stories professedly relating to the history of his race; these are sketches of foreign artists, who used colors supplied by their own environment. Not only in style and decoration, but also in idea and outline, Arthurian romance is a French construction.

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For cardinal merits, the tales are not indebted to Cymric character; on the contrary, their virtues are nearly the opposites of qualities which would have found favor in British antiquity. It is the Frenchman whom the stories represent; to Britain is due little more than a scene and opportunity.

Again, if these compositions are French, and in no respect Celtic, they belong to Frenchmen and Anglo-Normans, not because of any peculiar national genius, but as representative of certain historical conditions. This fiction is the earliest expression of a new civilization; it stands for the beginnings of modern literature; it is entitled to esteem as introducer and first owner of sentiments which we have learned to name romantic.

By the middle of the twelfth century, in the courts of France and England, had been formed a body of readers, in great part women, who had ceased to be content with the savage splendor of an epos designed for the amusement of warriors, and required of fiction especially nutriment for tender emotions. Romancers were therefore able to occupy themselves with the production of tales exhibiting qualities more amiable and brilliant than could be connected with themes hitherto treated by courtly poets. Any child might censure the

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boldness of an innovator who should venture too freely to recast the cycle of Charlemagne; in regard to a knight of Arthur anything was credible and everything permitted. In this manner, fairy-lore, encounters with giants and dwarfs, narrations of enchantment and adventure, which from time immemorial had figured in the popular literature of France, as of every European country, but which lay outside of the range permitted to fashionable poets, came to be attributed to heroes of the Round Table, and received a place in written letters. If this be admitted, the interest of the cycle for the history of thought will more than atone for the mistaken assumption that it constitutes the contribution of Celts to the mental store of Europe.

If, however, Arthurian fiction must chiefly be esteemed as indicating the conditions of a changed society and the advent of a new fiction, it will also be recognized as essentially a monument to a single great writer, whose genius has permanently affected European conceptions. To Crestien of Troyes, more than all other influences, is to be ascribed the character of extant Arthurian story.

For intellectual benefits it is agreeable to express gratitude, and to epoch-making minds such tribute has usually been accorded. This

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author is an exception; the poems of Crestien remain the property of scholars, nor is the critical edition of his works yet complete. In spite of this slow recognition, no mediæval writer better deserves attention; for some part of its delicate and tender sentiment, the modern world is indebted to this minstrel.

It must be admitted that the form of the plots in a measure answers to the fairy-tale; knight-errantry as here depicted scarcely corresponds to any social condition. It is, however, only the exterior which is fantastic; attending to the essence, it will be found that these productions, beyond any other accessible source of information, furnish means for estimating certain aspects of the society in which they were produced. The language, the costume, the manners, the pictures, are thoroughly characteristic. The reader is surprised to discover how little difficulty he has in putting himself into sympathy with an age, the ethics of which, as he soon finds, were not very remote from his own. We discover that the twelfth century, at its best, was modern in some of its moral characters; the delicacy of taste, the refinement of perception, exhibited on every page, surprise as much as they please, and form a revelation of mental history more instructive than chronicles can furnish.

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Great as is the archæological value of Crestien's poetry, such merit is small in comparison with its permanent literary worth. It would be extravagant to assert that the narrative verse of the French poet is to be put on a level with Homeric epos; the diversity is too great to permit comparison. Yet it may be affirmed that the mediæval romances are no less genuinely epic, and will be equally immortal. It may well be thought that among European predecessors of Dante, Crestien will be recognized as the most interesting. The colors of his painting, as usual with genuine art, become more glowing with the lapse of time. To him has belonged the privilege of genius, of depicting humanity in such manner that to the end of history the picture will be regarded with sympathy born of common hopes, fears, and destinies.

Strange to say, the truth of these remarks is so far from being recognized, that Crestien has seldom found an appreciative critic. His influence on European literature is partially conceded; as a poet, a painter, a moralist, he has not obtained the credit which he deserves. German historians of literature, until very lately, have been too much taken up with the merits of their compatriot Wolfram to do justice to his predecessor; French scholars, from

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whom might be expected a kinder judgment, have failed to admire the essential character of his genius; English writers are hardly acquainted with more than the outline of his themes. Such oversight is due to a theory which has represented the poet as a remodeller who contented himself with rhyming the stories he received, paying small attention to their sequence and import. It is possible, however, to maintain an opposite opinion. How closely the minstrel followed the conceptions of predecessors will remain uncertain; whatever may have been the extent of the obligation, his glory will be secured by the superb series of portraits with which he has enriched fiction. To support this assertion, it will be necessary to offer remarks on the surviving romances; but such an examination may be deferred, in order to introduce a cursory notice of probable sources.

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Arthurian Origins

TO the history of Arthurian legend is devoted an extensive critical literature; unhappily, investigation has hitherto been attended with the unsatisfactory result that it is scarce possible to offer a single uncontroverted statement. This uncertainty is a natural result of the inadequacy of premises; the early literature of the cycle has entirely disappeared. A sketch of accessible information must therefore be offered with reserve, and conclusions proposed as theories certainly defensible and apparently reasonable.

The few Welsh poems containing the name of Arthur, although sometimes dignified with the title of ancient, cannot be considered as older than the last quarter of the twelfth century; in other words, as posterior by almost fifty years to the time at which the reputation of Arthur had become a household word in Europe. The verses contain allusions which show that their writers were not unacquainted with the data of the current French romances. Among Welsh prose tales, several are adaptations of this French literature; the single narrative which furnishes independent information has been so entirely remodelled, and is so literary in form, that it cannot be taken to

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represent the ideas and situations of Cymric folk-lore antecedent to the thirteenth century.

In spite of the scantiness of the material, the extant documents contain notices sufficient to indicate that ancient Welsh Arthurian literature had once abundantly existed, and had depicted Arthur in a character quite contrary to that in which he is presented by French fiction. To Welsh folk of the twelfth century, as no doubt to their forefathers from a time far more ancient, the Briton was familiar as a giant queller and hunter, as the pursuer of a white boar and the slayer of an enchanted cat. It is possible that there existed statements in regard to his family, district, and relation to Saxon invaders. On such points, however, surviving Welsh texts furnish no information, a deficiency sufficiently revealing their imperfection as representative of mediæval popular story.

The enlightenment not obtainable from Cymric sources may be sought in Latin documents dealing with the relations of Britons to Saxons. The earliest of these is a treatise, professing to be in the nature of a lamentation, to which has been assigned the name of De Excidio Britanniæ, or Account of the Destruction of Britain. This production is ascribed to Gildas, a personage in the sixth

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century apparently famous as the author of letters on church discipline, of which have been preserved fragments accounted authentic in substance if not in style. The author, who alleges himself to belong to the second generation after the Saxon invasion, undertakes to recite the fortunes of the island. Of the political situation he gives an extraordinary picture. According to his account, Saxon mercenaries employed against Picts and Scots, and who revolt under pretext of insufficient supplies, immediately devastate the island from sea to sea, with the result that the country becomes a desert; Britons, helpless and passive, emigrate, sell themselves into slavery, or fly to the mountains. The voluntary retreat of the pirates affords a breathing space; the survivors, emerging from their hiding-places, and electing as leader the last Roman, Ambrosius Aurelianus, give battle to their returning adversaries; a long contest ends in a British victory at the siege of Badonicus Mons, a locality not further indicated; this encounter, according to the writer, took place in the year of his own birth, forty-four years antecedent to the period of composition.

At this time, inasmuch as the generation which had witnessed the Saxon assault still remained on the scene, it was possible to re-

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store civil and ecclesiastical authority as it had existed before the irruption. During his own lifetime, for near half a century, Britain had been free from external attack; the folk, no longer disturbed by piratical incursions, were at liberty to turn their arms against each other; the land was desolate, but on account of internal dissensions. Arthur is not mentioned, the writer attributing the conduct of the Saxon wars to a different personage, the Ambrosius already named.

By the aid of information supplied by the work described, and by incorporating new material, was produced a compilation ascribed to a certain Nennius, but lately critically edited under the title of Historia Britonum. The date of this composition is matter of controversy. A chapter in the nature of an appendage, occupying less than a single page, deals with the exploits of Arthur represented as a soldier who in the Saxon struggle commanded the British forces; the leader on the other side is said to have been the son of Hengist, who succeeded his father as king of Kent.

Twelve battles are enumerated, in which Arthur is declared to have been triumphant; the majority of the localities are obscure; the idea of the writer seems to be that the encounters took place in all parts of Britain.

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As the place of the final contest mentioned is Mons Badonis, it seems likely that the author borrowed and altered the name of that Badonicus Mons at which his predecessor had fixed the final British victory. If he so proceeded in one instance, he may have taken the same course in other cases; the twelve battles may be only a series of engagements arbitrarily assigned to Arthur, with whom some or all may have had no original connection. In regard to the birth and personal history of the British leader, the passage furnishes no instruction, nor does it appear that the writer had any definite idea in regard to events preceding or following the time of the hero. It is likely that this account, although unhistorical, had a considerable part in promoting Arthur to the dignity of an over-king of Britain.

In the year 1125, a mention of William of Malmesbury makes it clear that contemporary Britons (by whom he may have meant Welshmen) related an extravagant series of tales regarding Arthur, whose return, as he says, they awaited; he also notes the fame of Arthur's nephew Walwen (in later English orthography, Gawain). A confirmation is furnished by a French traveller, the narrative of whose journey, made a decade before, was published

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at a later date; in this statement it is recited that Cornishmen considered their country peculiarly the land of Arthur, and that they entertained a fanatical conception of his return.

Not very long after the publication of William's work appeared an elaborate treatise giving a connected account of the fortunes of Britain. This was the celebrated production of Geoffrey of Monmouth, now entitled Historia Regum Britanniæ, and given to the world about 1137. The narrative was based on the Historia Britonum, as the latter had been suggested by the work ascribed to Gildas. Respecting the early life of Geoffrey no information exists; it is not even clear whether he was of British or Norman stock. For the purpose of giving authority to his history, he alleged it to be a translation of an ancient British (*i. e.* Cymric) chronicle which, as he avers, Walter of Oxford had imported from Brittany. The character of the narrative is sufficient to prove this origin imaginary; in so far as the book is more than an elaboration of the Historia Britonum, it consists of a patchwork made up from all quarters, the largest portion contributed by the fancy of the ingenious author; the work must be regarded as an historical novel, in

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which the chief part is played by Arthur, whose deeds, however, form only the central chapters in a long account of struggles between the owners of the soil and foreign assailants; the interest is racial, rather than personal.

For the first time, we are provided with a genealogy; we read of Aurelius Ambrosius (a name altered from the De Excidio), of his brother Uter Pendragon, of Igerna, mother of Arthur, and the seer Merlinus. After Uter's death, Northumbria is in the hands of Saxons; these the youthful Arthur, aided by Hoel of Brittany, defeats in four battles. The war is ended at Mount Badon; the victor conducts a brilliant succession of foreign expeditions; Ireland, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, and finally Gaul, are brought under his sway; Arthur assumes the crown, at a feast attended by all his vassals, and exhibiting the unequalled splendor of his household, an object of admiration and imitation in Europe. The jealousy of Rome leads to a contest conducted in southern Gaul; the Briton, completely victorious, carries his banners into Switzerland, and is on the point of crossing the Alps, when he is recalled by tidings of the disloyalty of his nephew Mordred, left as viceroy in Britain, and of his queen Guanhumara. The

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king crosses the Channel; at Dover, Winchester, and finally in Cornwall, take place a series of battles; in the last, fought at the river Camel, the usurper is supported by a host made up of all enemies of Britain, Saxons, Picts, and Scots. Among leaders on either side, the greater part perishes; Mordred is slain, and the wounded Arthur borne to the isle of Avalon, to the end that his injuries may be healed; apparently with reference to the statement respecting Arthur's reappearance, made by William of Malmesbury, it is stated that the further fate of the king was unknown. The successors of Arthur suffer from the effects of their own vices as much as from Saxon aggression; the last king, Cadwalladrus, dies in Rome, and the best portion of the population emigrates, leaving to the degenerate relics of the race only civil discord and the title of Welshmen.

There can be little doubt that Geoffrey was more or less indebted to current British stories, such as those mentioned by William of Malmesbury; it is, however, possible that these were literary inventions of a recent time, rather than ancient popular legends, like those known to have existed in Wales. On the other hand, allowance is to be made for the additions of the historian, who seems to have

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added most of the detail and some of the important elements of the narrative. For his account of Saxon wars he had no source other than the brief mention of the Historia Britonum, which he abridged and decorated. The names of British nobles, mentioned as taking part in the coronation feast, appear to have been derived from Welsh literature, without much regard to any previous Arthurian connection. In describing adventures with giants, comparison indicates that Geoffrey has drawn from Anglo-Norman sources. Of the whole story, the final struggle with Mordred and the departure for Avalon is perhaps the only part which bears traces of genuine Cymric antiquity; but here, also, the narrative must have been so reworked as to have little resemblance to the legend in which it may have originated. According to this view, the history gives little direct aid in promoting attempts to reconstruct popular Welsh tradition, with which it has only indirect connection.

However arbitrary may have been Geoffrey's account, and however inconsistent with ancient Welsh notions, the new version of Arthur's activity received credit in Wales, where it circulated in the form of translations which have received the name of Bruts.

By Anglo-Normans the verity of the record

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was generally conceded, even though a sharp-sighted critic might suspect the accuracy of the recital. The work became so thoroughly the fashion that a man of letters who allowed himself to appear unacquainted with the history of ancient British kings, by such ignorance exposed himself to the charge of dulness and rusticity. Credit was given to the fabulous glory of a reign in which, as Wace afterwards put it, the peasantry of Britain had exhibited greater courtesy than the nobility of other lands; the extent of the homage was shown by the thrill of fear and indignation with which Norman writers permitted themselves to mention the British hope. It is likely that minstrels cast the history into romantic form, and made it accessible to the non-reading public. The adventures of knights of the Round Table, recounted by French Arthurian poets, were in part transferred from other sources; but the king in whose reign these champions figured was depicted as the Arthur of the accepted history, and in this manner the outline of Geoffrey's work formed the frame into which were inserted stories which, whether descending from Cymric or foreign roots, formed the characteristic part of Arthurian literature.

As even in the first quarter of the twelfth

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century the fame of the Briton was known to Anglo-Normans, there is nothing in itself improbable in the supposition that even before the publication of Geoffrey's history Arthurian tales had attracted the attention of Anglo-Norman minstrels, and received treatment in French verse. On the other hand, there is nothing to prove the previous existence of such compositions. One would think that Geoffrey's commonplace description could not have attracted general attention had the matter already been familiar. Had he known romances containing qualities analogous to those of the compositions with which we are acquainted, he could scarcely have failed to exhibit acquaintance with similar stories. The existing romances bear no mark of evolution from barbarous antecedents; had early French Arthurian tales ever possessed the more primitive character which must have belonged to narratives of the early part of the twelfth century, it would seem that such quality could hardly have been so completely eliminated as appears to be the case.

In the generation that followed the appearance of the Historia Regum Britanniæ, French (including Anglo-Norman) Arthurian verse abounded; but of this literature not a line has survived. Of the lost romances, some

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probably depended on data supplied by Cymric reciters, and in this manner elements of the Cymric legends, Welsh or Breton, may have entered French literature. These, however, must have undergone a complete recast in order to adapt such barbarous stories to the courtly sovereign of the received history. It may be thought likely that the first essays in the new field found their distinctive element in colorless descriptions of ideal courtesy and chivalry, and distinctive excellences were developed only in proportion as French poets were able to define the parts and characters of famous personages. In any case, as regards the surviving romances, there can be little doubt that the bulk of the material was derived from quarters foreign to Britain. Within a few years it became a practice of courtly minstrels to refer to British antiquity any romantic love-tale; the theory came to prevail that to Britons had been due the invention of adventurous and sentimental poetry. French authors did not find it difficult to spice their compositions with the names of persons and places possessing Cymric assonance, calculated to reassure readers who were anxious to obtain a story fashionably British.

Arthurian verse of the latter part of the century, in the mass, has also perished, little

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remaining save the work of Crestien and his continuators; nor are the independent compositions sufficient in compass to afford satisfactory information respecting the qualities of this literature. It is therefore chiefly from the romances of Crestien himself that his sources must be conjectured. It may well be that among Anglo-Norman or French forerunners, from whom he derived the material of his best works, may have been numbered men of genius, who worked in a spirit similar to his own; if so, the fame of these unknown predecessors, as properly happens in such cases, has been merged in the bright orb which has absorbed their rays.

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Crestien of Troyes

RESPECTING the personal history of Crestien (in English orthography, Christian) nothing is known; he was a layman, and by profession a minstrel; his surname indicates birth in Champagne. According to his own mention, his earliest essays in verse seem to have consisted in translations from Ovid. His first original work was a romance dealing with the story of Tristran (in later spelling, Tristan). Of his epic compositions five are extant; in order of time these are: Erec et Enidè, Cliges, Chevalier de la Charrette (relating to Lancelot), Chevalier au Lion (relating to Yvain), Perceval. Allusions fix the second and fourth as written between 1164 and 1173; the Erec may with plausibility be referred to about 1165, the Perceval to a decade later. The latter poem is unfinished; a proem of doubtful authenticity asserts it to have been written at the instance of Philip of Flanders. The Lancelot is dedicated to the daughter of Louis VII., Countess Marie of Champagne. It is therefore evident that in his lifetime the minstrel enjoyed courtly favor; the celebrity thus acquired speedily extended beyond French territory. The character of the verse shows that the author had

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received the best education of the time, and was conversant with such literature as might be accessible to a cultivated layman. Its quality indicates a life not wanting in content, a genial temper, a considerate and thoughtful disposition. Such is our information concerning a writer whose first extant production constitutes an epoch in the history of European letters. The merits of the poetry, and its influence on the thought of the period, may be exhibited by brief comments on the surviving romances.

In the Erec, it is not the hero, but the heroine, who constitutes the central figure. The poet intended to portray a noble wife, disturbed by her husband's loss of honor, and daring his anger to admonish him, as she afterwards defies his wrath in order to save him. Enidè is not merely the earliest of modern women, she is also one of the noblest. No more tender, delicate, and pictorial likeness exists in the gallery of romantic poetry. On the other hand, the idea of the work makes it natural to subordinate the husband. Erec represents the mediæval baron, frank and affectionate, but imperious, and unwilling to suffer blame from his wife, even though he confess the rebuke deserved. The character of the lady is thus allowed to shine forth in

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all its brilliancy, as the proper centre of the action.

The theme has undergone singular treatment. At a period not to be determined with precision, a Welsh writer undertook to adapt the work. With a license common in his age and country, he altered the incidents, with a view of producing what he conceived to be a more interesting effect. In the same spirit he rechristened the hero, substituting for Erec the name Geraint. The story, thus remodelled, remained buried in manuscript until Lady Guest exhumed it from the Red Book of Hergest, and, together with a faithful translation, presented it to English readers in the collection to which she gave the name of Mabinogion. In this form the merits of the tale attracted the attention of Tennyson, who made it the basis of a pleasing "idyll," abundantly supplied with that decoration which forms the salient feature of most modern narrative poetry. It is interesting to compare the result with its French original of eight centuries earlier. The issue of the comparison is not unfavorable to the latter. Enidè is, in some respects, a finer person than her later double. The action of the English poem is vulgarized by a serious mistake, which might have been avoided had pains been

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taken to consult the French work. Indifferent to the idea of his source, the Welsh writer introduced language which causes the husband to appear affected by jealousy instead of pride, and this error was followed by the English writer. So far, the scheme of the Frenchman was more delicate and human. It must also be admitted that the canvas of the earlier artist is broader, his coloring more brilliant, his vivacity superior, as might be expected in the case of a romancer dealing with the manners of his own time, as compared with a poet who elects to use the costume of a conventional antiquity.

The Erec, after an interval of uncertain duration, was followed by the Cliges. In this composition, Crestien attained a complete mastery of language and rhyme; nothing can be more lucid and elegant than his style, the perfection of narrative verse. Over-facility is dangerous; perhaps the tale has forfeited something of the delightful simplicity and obvious enthusiasm which characterized the former work. Nevertheless, in this instance also, the design is original, and displays a poetic impulse genuine and worthy. This essential spontaneity is revealed by comparison with the story of the lost epos, known from other sources. The theme of the Tris-

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tran had been the passion connecting a youth with the wife of his uncle and benefactor. In the tale now under consideration, the story also turns on the affection of a young knight for the queen of his uncle. The latter, however, is now depicted, not as a friend, but as an injurer of the hero, who has broken the oath binding him to celibacy; in taking the bride, Cliges enforces his right. The lovers admit their passion; but the moral sense of neither will consent to the secret alliance approved in the previous romance. Fenicè considers it a shame to belong to one person in the sight of the world and to another in private allegiance, a disgrace to which, as she declares, she will never submit; by the expedient of a feigned death the lady comes into the possession of her lover, with whom she flies to a country where it may be possible to lead a reputable life. In this turn of the story it is probable that the poet expressed his own dissatisfaction with the familiar theme to which he now deliberately devised a counterpart. In order to secure variety, according to a method of the time, Crestien laid the basis of the action in the adventures of a previous generation. This preface, reciting the acquaintance of the father and mother of the hero, makes a love-tale moving along

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legitimate paths to a happy termination. The material was obtained, on one hand, from the new romantic notions of the age, on the other, from its exploits of chivalry; the composition, therefore, may be considered as a creation of the twelfth century, and as characteristic of its life. The remarkable feature is the method of representing affection. Love is described as a teacher whose lessons are purely noble, and whose discipline, however severe, is to be accepted without a murmur. Thus, in the field of healthy and natural life is laid the foundation for later mystical conceptions; so is struck the keynote which characterizes modern literature, as contrasted with that of antiquity. Romances innumerable, since the day of Crestien, have treated the relation, but none, even to the present day, with more sweetness and spirit. In considering this picture, the interval of time vanishes; in the world of Crestien's thought, we are in the world of modern ideas.

It is a strange contrast which is made by the third of the surviving poems. The Chevalier de la Charrette, or Knight of the Cart, is devoted to the story of Lancelot of the Lake, of which it treats only an episode. The queen of Arthur, carried away by a ravisher, has been conveyed to a land whence no ad-

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venturer returns; the task of rescue is accomplished by Lancelot, who, in order to facilitate pursuit, is obliged to ride in a cart used as a tumbril to convey prisoners to execution; hence the title of the fantastic narrative. Lancelot and the queen are represented to be lovers; the tale is modelled on that same story of Tristan to which Crestien had opposed that of Cliges. Apart from this imitative character, the action has fatal defects, being commonplace and inconsequent; the verse, almost devoid of agreeable lines, contains little deserving admiration.

Of this declension the author gives an explanation, setting forth that he had received the material from the Countess Marie, and had contented himself with putting into rhyme the incidents as he had found them. Statements of mediæval writers regarding their sources are seldom to be implicitly accepted; in the present case, the nature of the composition supports the assertion, which is further confirmed by the consideration that the author became weary of his task, which he abandoned to another hand; and indeed it may be doubted how large a share he has had in the poem.

The fourth romance, relating the history of Yvain (in English spelling, Ewain), contains

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references to the narrative last mentioned of such character as to indicate that the works were nearly contemporaneous. The difference is marked by the original quality which now reappears. As the Cliges had been written with reference to the Tristan, so is the Chevalier au Lion the counterpart of the Erec. In the latter, Crestien had presented a wife, who, on account of a rebuke bestowed on her over-fond husband, had been subjected to a series of trials, through the endurance of which she is enabled to attest the sincerity of her devotion. In the present tale, the relation is reversed; neglect brought about by enthusiasm for military adventure justifies the indignation of the neglected lady. It is now the man's part, by submission and constancy, to establish the sincerity of his attachment; as in the former story the wife had resigned her will to the unreasonable severity of her husband, in the present case it is the knight who accepts a sentence which he acknowledges just, and obeys the decision of the lady he loves, even though by law and custom she is under his own control. This manner of presentation requires variation in the preliminary history; the exigencies of the situation do not admit of a close tie or long courtship; the countess marries the slayer of her

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first husband in order to obtain a champion who may be able to defend her castle. The heroine in this narration cannot be said to appear in an agreeable light. It is the hero of the action who is the interesting personage. The warrior who without question submits to the severity of the wife he has wronged, and voluntarily embraces an exile in which he makes himself the ally of the distressed, is depicted with a charming simplicity, rendering the picture a hundred times more instructive than any modern essay devoted to exhibiting the chivalric ideal.

At this point may be introduced a word respecting the localities in which are laid the scenes of these dramas. The incidents of the Erec are supposed to occur in forests at no great distance from Cardigan; those related in the Chevalier au Lion occur in the wood of Broceliande, in Crestien apparently taken to belong to Scotland. Wanderings of Gawain are laid in Galloway; those of Perceval in woods adjacent to Carlisle. It is therefore to North Britain that Crestien especially assigns the adventures of his heroes; only in the Cliges does the action take place in England. It is not difficult to understand why the border-land is preferred; in the minstrel's time this region was famous as a desert, and only in

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wildernesses do fairies and giants reside and are adventures to be encountered. Obviously not in this manner would inhabitants of North Britain have described their country; the localizations furnish ground for the belief that the material was derived from Anglo-Norman romancers, who may have used Welsh suggestions but could not closely have followed any Welsh tale.

The last work of our writer was the most ambitious; for the first time, a mediæval poet conceived the idea of interweaving two parallel plots in such manner as to afford contrast and avoid monotony. The story was never completed, and there exist no means of forming any conjecture as to the way in which the artist designed to develop his scheme; in spite of consequent inability to grasp the scheme as a whole, the unfinished poem possesses merits which will secure for it a perpetual place among compositions which have opened new paths for thought.

The part of the tale devoted to Perceval is remarkable especially in this, that it constitutes an early attempt to exhibit in fiction the history of mental development. For this purpose, Crestien takes for his hero a youth educated in the desert by a widowed mother. Of quick intelligence, and acquainted with as much as a

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woman can teach, the boy is wholly unversed in the ways of the world. Romantic literature does not include passages more beautiful, alike in language and conception, than those in which the author, breaking boldly into the middle of his theme, brings the brave and innocent boy in contact with the cavaliers whose radiant aspect has awakened his ardent ambition. Nothing can be more delicately portrayed than the counsels of the mother who sees her nestling taking flight, or more pathetic than the situation in which the youth proceeds to achieve his destiny, unconsciously an orphan, and marked for the victim of remorse. The lad enters the great world, where he speedily profits by the lessons of experience; with the license of rapidity, in every period allowed to romance, the youth is trained in arms and instructed in love. He arrives at the house of the kinsman whom it is his duty to relieve, and fails in the task because he has not yet attained the necessary character, and has left unatoned the unconscious fault with which his active life began.

The rebuke of Perceval's cousin makes him sensible of his error; informed of his mother's death, which as yet he scarcely comprehends, he falls into pensiveness, which, in a charming passage, is made to find expression in a revery

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of desire. Avenging the insult of the malicious seneschal, he becomes the friend of the noblest of knights, and is received with honor at the court of Arthur. On a sudden the blow, all along foreseen by the reader, falls upon his head; the fair youth is subjected to an accusation against which lance and shield are of no effect. We see him, of free will, depart on a hopeless quest, an exile from the court of Britain, and separated from the lady of his love. His remorse finds expression in a sorrow which affects him to despair, and leaves a passion for imperilling life in desperate ventures; indignation against the injustice of fate appears in aversion to religious emotion.

In fine contrast to the sensitive Perceval is depicted the hardy Gawain, who undergoes with indifference a similar accusation, being well aware that with the sword he is able to defend his good name; in opposition to the melancholy of the previous scene is the gay movement of episodes, in which the foremost knight of the Round Table is presented in his most amiable character. It is not too much to affirm that narrative poetry may be searched in vain for a tale of childhood as agreeable as that which the trouvère has created. In the sequel, the knight, proceeding on his way, unwittingly arrives at the very

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town where he has undertaken to justify himself by wager of battle; attacked by avengers of blood, he is protected by the daughter of his enemy, who on the principles of feudal ethics ought to have been eager for his destruction. In this situation the poet followed a practice common among mediæval minstrels, who took pleasure in representing ties of kinship as superseded by those of affection. From the nature of the case, as well as from the promise of the hero, it seems likely that this was the lady with whom the romancer intended permanently to unite Gawain. If the latter has not in Arthurian romance received a permanent companion, and in virtue of his unattached character has become liable to the charge of lightness in love, it is perhaps for no other reason than the incompletion of the present story; no succeeding narrator had the authority to impose his own version of the knight's adventures, and he appears entangled in many amours. In Crestien's tale, a second lady is introduced, and it remains uncertain which of the two is intended to take the principal part.

The story returns to Perceval. After five years, on the day of the Crucifixion the young knight reappears on the scene, in splendid apparel, presenting a strange contrast to bare-

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foot pilgrims, who rebuke his disregard of the holy day, and who recommend the confessor to whose cell they have themselves resorted. Perceval, following their direction, arrives at the hermitage of his uncle, confesses and receives absolution. Of his further fate we learn nothing; the lovely tale was never completed, nor is it now possible to conjecture the intent of the poet. We may believe that the hero was designed once more to visit the infirm kinsman whom he was destined to relieve, and be restored to the arms of his mistress; further than this there is no indication of the sequel, nor were the contemporaries of the poet informed as to the issue.

After the disappearance of the leading personage, the poem proceeds with a narrative obviously controlled by intentional parallelism; as Perceval has failed because not yet fit for success, Gawain, who needs no education, is set to accomplish a similar task, and to acquire a glory answering to that awaiting the chief actor after the latter shall have performed his part. The imperfection of the tale makes it unintelligible in regard to its connection with the previous scenes; it must also be allowed that the movement appears to languish. There is reason to believe that the author was not following the track of an older story, but in-

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venting as he proceeded. In order to bring together the threads of the play, a long history would have been required. It may be that the author's health failed, it may also be that he abandoned his undertaking because he felt his inability properly to connect the parts of his fiction. Whatever be the truth, his poem ends in the middle of a phrase, a sudden conclusion of a fruitful activity.

The Perceval is the earliest of the romances in which allusion is made to a Grail (graal). In this case, however, the term is not a proper but a common noun, being a familiar Romance word, often employed to denote a dish, such as was used to serve food at the banquets of important persons. The dish, in Crestien's poem, is described as a vessel in which a holy man receives the consecrated wafer, sufficient, according to the conceptions of the time, to nourish men of pious life. The reference is so slight as to deserve the title of incidental, nor does there appear anything calculated to assure us that the author intended the dish to play an important part in the subsequent action. However this may be, there appears no ground for supposing that the poet had any notion of the function afterwards assigned to the Holy Grail, taken as a proper name, and represented to have been the vessel employed in the Paschal

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Supper of Jesus. It is permissible to conjecture that this office and the symbolism therewith associated were outgrowths arising from speculations concerning the plan of Crestien's unfinished narrative. As connected with the eucharistic rite, the Holy Grail became the centre of a series of later French romances; some knowledge of such compositions must have reached the German Wolfram of Eschenbach, who by such assistance was able to recast the tale, and in his Parzival to produce a composition which will endure as long as the original of which his poem is essentially an interpretation. The difference between the style and spirit of the two works does not justify the assumption that the German author had arrived at a more poetic conception; such diversity is rather to be explained as the contrast of a generation consciously romantic to the simplicity of a more epic predecessor. Crestien describes education in chivalry, of which the essential duties are charity and piety; Wolfram enlarges, but also blurs, the outlines of the action in favor of a presentation typically human. There is no need to set in opposition the productions, which may be taken together as artistic expressions in which mediæval chivalric feeling most nearly attained self-consciousness of its worthiest qualities.

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Although the contemporaries and successors of the trouvère imperfectly appreciated his intellectual superiority, they were sufficiently affected by the merits of his tales to bestow on his verse a separate place above the throng of imitators. His reputation, extending to all countries using Romance languages, became equally familiar in Provence, Italy, and Spain. His narratives received the compliment of Welsh appropriation; in the form of translations they circulated in Scandinavia as well as in England. Finally, in the decline of mediæval conceptions, the poet who especially represented chivalry fell into oblivion, and the repute of Crestien disappeared from literature, to be rediscovered only in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Prose Romances

IT has already been remarked that of French Arthurian poetry of the twelfth century little is extant save the work of Crestien and his continuators. From the thirteenth century has survived a considerable body of such verse, but for the most part devoid of merit. The romancers, who generally copied the external excellences of the master, lacked the dignity of feeling and intellectual interest necessary to produce a serious impression; apart from such saving graces, their ease becomes offensive, and the light flow of their verse a tiresome babble.

In England, down to the fifteenth century, Arthurian poetry continued to be in favor, and included not merely translations and adaptations of Crestien's tales, but also original narratives not directly emanating from his influence, although affected by the character which he had given the cycle. Of this persistency a sufficient explanation may be found in the pride taken in the fame of Arthur, conceived to have been a reigning prince of Britain, who had raised the island to a matchless height of prosperity and renown. In particular, two works, by authors nearly contemporary with Chaucer, possess remarkable

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merit. One of these, treating of the end of Arthur's career, and founded on French prose romance, will presently be the subject of remark. The other and earlier production, The Green Knight, justly esteemed as a treasure of mediæval English literature, contains a heroic element perhaps to be regarded as a survival from an early period of the cycle. In this narration, the characters of Arthur and of Gawain his nephew are presented with much spirit; the composition, however, scarce attains to the dignity of a work entitled to a place in general literature, while it has no close relation to the accepted outlines of Arthur's story. For the last reason it is not here necessary further to consider the tale.

It is in prose, rather than verse, that the evolution of Arthurian fiction proceeded. From the end of the twelfth century prose narratives obtained favor, being recommended by fulness, lucidity, ease, — in short, by the qualities which in modern time have given predominance to the novel. In addition, these histories, as furnishing a coherent account of Arthur's career, were supposed to deserve the consideration attaching to chronicles. The foundation of such prolix compositions was the narrative of Geoffrey of Monmouth, adorned with fanciful decorations due

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solely to the imagination of successive elaborators.

These differed from the Latin original above all in the part played by Lancelot of the Lake, whose passion for Arthur's queen now became the pivot about which revolved the fortunes of the Round Table. For such representation existed a prototype in the earlier tale of Tristan, whose name, understood to signify the Knight of Sorrow, indicates the sentiment to which appealed a narration dealing with the irresistible power of passion, described as triumphant over all obligations of honor and duty, but ennobled by constancy and misfortune. This manner of conception, recommended by the difficulties of courtship so long as the person of a noble damsel was at the disposal of the father or feudal suzerain, was too consonant to the taste and circumstances of the Middle Age to be omitted from the new cycle; in the devotion of Lancelot and Guenievre (in current English orthography, Guinevere), the attachment of Tristan and Iseut was refined and ennobled. The fame of other heroes was dimmed by that of a cavalier who presented, in a manner congenial to courtly morals, the controlling power of inclination.

The prose romances, in their present form

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belonging to the thirteenth century, represent the work of many hands. Although included among early issues of the printing-press, their compass has prevented complete modern republication; their text exhibits confusion, nor has a comparison been made sufficient to determine authentic readings; it is therefore only by means of abstracts and paraphrases that they are as yet entirely accessible.

The romance of Lancelot seems to form a library of fiction, of which different volumes exhibit opposite qualities. In one part prevails a refined sensuality, adapted to courtly readers, who demanded that the freedom of rude antiquity should be masked in pleasant language and courtly costume; in another rule the ascetic ethics of the monk, to whom the world is infamous because it is the world. For a time the story touches lightly on sacred things, as belonging to a separate sphere, with which cavaliers have only conventional concern; presently we find ourselves in a mystic atmosphere, where among half lights common objects resolve themselves into pious dreams. Here, the tale glides on with interminable dulness; there, it speeds with the fulness of a river hastening toward its final cataract. This diversity may be illustrated by remarks on three of the sections, attributable to differ-

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ent authors, into which the history may be divided.

After an account of the parents of the hero, and his stealing by a fairy in whose halls he is educated, comes a long narrative which describes the beginning and progress of the love-tale, and which appears to have received the name of Galehaut. The Lady of the Lake brings to court her protégé, herself furnishing knightly arms and demanding of Arthur only the ceremonial investiture; from the interview the youth, beholding the loveliness of the queen, receives a lifelong impression; in her commonplace words of courtesy he hears the expression of endearment. Refusing to accept his sword from the hands of the king, Lancelot is determined to account himself the knight of Guinevere, for whose sake he performs the tasks allotted to him. It is the purpose of the romancer to include in his picture sentimental friendship as well as sentimental love; for such purpose, as devoted friends, whom the attractions of the hero have bound by irresistible and unselfish attachment, are introduced two new characters. Galehaut, prince of the Isles and enemy of Arthur, surrenders to the king, with the sole purpose of thereby commending himself to Lancelot, for whom he has conceived an enthusiastic

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worship, and of purchasing the right to become his perpetual companion. Discovering the passion of his comrade, he sets about promoting its success, and arranges a secret interview with the queen, who is attended by a lady, the dame of Malehaut; the latter, having herself been enamored of Lancelot, and being assured that his heart is engaged, has travelled to Arthur's court, with a view of discovering the secret. Lancelot is brought into the presence of Guinevere, who forces from the youth a declaration of love; the queen, listening without surprise, inquires what cause can have inspired such deep passion. At these words, the lady of Malehaut, who stands within hearing, with eyes fixed on the ground, looks up and coughs. This intimation, coming from one whose affection he has himself rejected, touches Lancelot to the heart; to the queen he responds that her own words have rendered him her lover; when accepting his knightly service, she had entitled him "fair sweet friend," an expression that had always lingered in his memory, as encouragement and solace. Galehaut, pleading his own services, implores Guinevere to bestow on Lancelot her favor, and, in earnest of her good faith, to grant a kiss, which is accordingly rendered.

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To this scene Dante has twice alluded. In the fifth book of the Inferno, the poet, passing through the second circle, where in eternal dusk the souls of sinful lovers are forever blown by changing winds, is allowed to converse with Francesca and Paolo; the former explains the cause of their punishment, and the poet casts down his eyes. "Alas! what tender thought, what desire, have brought them to the dolorous pass?" He inquires how, "in the time of sweet sighs," had been awakened their "dubious desires." Francesca describes the birth of their passion: —

> One day it pleased to read of Lancelot,
> And of the way Love bound him in his chain;
> Alone were we, suspicion had we none.
> A many times perusal of that page
> Compelled our glances, and our color changed;
> A single place it was, that overcame.
> For when we learned how the desirèd smile
> Was kissed by such a lover,
> He, who from me be severed nevermore,
> All trembling, kissed my lips.
> Galeotto was the book, and he who wrote;
> That day, we read no further.

Dante means to say that the writer of the book had guided Francesca and Paolo to an unhappy fate, as the counsel of Galehaut, a trusted friend, had misled Lancelot and the queen of Arthur.

Again, in the sixteenth canto of the Para-

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diso, the poet, accosting the spirit of his noble ancestor, uses the plural case, a form of address implying reverence, and savoring of family pride. The indulgent smile of Beatrice checks his foible; he compares her to the lady who had coughed in listening to the words which form the first fault recorded of Arthur's queen: —

> Ridendo, parve quella che tossío,
> Al primo fallo scritto di Ginevra.

These references are doubly interesting; as respects the period, they show with what earnestness the Middle Age, to which had lately been opened the field of pleasure to be found in gentle emotion, welcomed histories which modern readers, sated with similar feelings, find it impossible to peruse; as regards the man, it gives a welcome insight into the experience of the Florentine, who had hung over the romance, made himself familiar with its details, and formed his own interpretation of its obscure passages.

A complete contrast is presented by a work composed as an independent tale, but in the end introduced into the Lancelot. The author of the Queste del Saint Graal (Quest of the Holy Grail) entertained or affected extreme monastic ethics. In the Perceval of Crestien he found a beautiful reconciliation of the

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chivalric and religious life on a secular basis. This conception he rejected, and undertook to embody a scheme conventionally ascetic. To the mind of this writer the splendor of the Round Table was dust and ashes; for Gawain, its representative, he entertained hostility and contempt. Among cavaliers who played a leading part in the cycle, he favored only the sinner Lancelot, with the indulgence felt by a severe critic of the world for one whose errors serve to exhibit the world's worthlessness. As a churchman, he rejoiced in describing the failure of the hero in whose condemnation was condemned the secular order; as an artist, he found in the lover of the queen a foil, suitable to bring into bright relief the figure of Galahad, now commended as victor of the quest, and made to supersede the discarded Perceval; as a novelist, by representing his chief character to be a son of Lancelot, he was able to utilize the reputation of the latter in order to promote the circulation of his history.

To the author of the Queste the essential virtue is virginity, a name under which is included not merely chastity (itself a euphemism for celibacy), but total absence of sexual impulse. The ideal of the cloister is freedom from earthly wishes. Galahad is portrayed as

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an angel or monk in the garb of a knight, riding through earth without love or fear, doubt, failure, or disappointment, possessed of no quality, save physical beauty, able to make him the object either of affection or censure. The narrative displays no development of personality, no characteristic portraiture; having its chief literary merit in an agreeable style, it proceeds with the cold indifference of a writer who is conscious that his tale is an allegory. The outward world can scarcely be said to exist; we are in the realm of religious ideas, supernatural forces of light and darkness, of whose struggle the visible universe is merely a symbol. Accepting this conception, the story is devoid of depth; in this drama the actors are as mechanical as the properties; the reader asks himself whether the creator of the play aimed at any end higher than the production of a fashionable novel. If such was his purpose, the task was a success. The prose style permitted the supposition, encouraged by the tenor of the narrative, that it was entitled to the credit of history; incorporation with the adventures of Lancelot favored its authority; while, in return, the attraction of the new romance extended the influence of a body of fiction capable equally of gratifying sentimental taste and appealing to religious

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austerity. In such manner, and through popular preference for masses over detail, for myth above character, the fame of Galahad came to supersede that of the more human Perceval. Nor need such preference be esteemed remarkable, when it is remembered that admiration of the passionless ideal has continued to our day. In the figure of Galahad, mediæval readers may have delighted in a conception which perhaps dimly floated before the author of the story, the face of a pure-minded and contemplative youth, intent on celestial ambition to the forgetfulness of earthly hope; they may have conceived the portrait to be endowed with such feature and expression as, a century later, art, always the follower of literature, represented on Tuscan panels. The acceptance of the thirteenth century, and the modern familiarity of the tale, entitles the work to a consideration which it would scarce obtain on purely critical principles of judgment.

To the concluding section of the Lancelot, that relating to the death of King Arthur, belongs a spirit distinct from either the sentimental or ascetic portions of the narration. This part has the elements of a genuine and grand tragedy; the plot is arranged in the manner, not of the novel or the legend, but of

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epos. Such grandeur, however, seems to exist in conception only. The authors of the extant composition, so far as can be judged from printed material, did not possess the genius to develop the essence of the tale in a manner calculated to make it interesting for modern readers. Yet the characterization is not wanting in distinctness and verity; the jealousy and repentance of the queen is skilfully contrasted with the steadfast fidelity of her lover; Gawain, the traditional hero of the Round Table, still sustains the part of a noble knight, slow to take up against his friend Lancelot the quarrel which, once begun, he will maintain to the death; only weak is the portrait of the king, depicted as now a passive tool of his nephew, and presently as the resolute leader in mighty wars. The catastrophe is exhibited as the natural sequel of the love tale. Arthur's disaster is due to the absence of Lancelot, and also to the loss of Gawain, wounded in his combat with the former. Lancelot is recalled by the tidings of his master's fate, to inflict useless vengeance and nurse unavailing regrets. Such a narrative of necessity superseded the sapless account of Geoffrey. This portion of the story, forming the conclusion of the long romance, appears in substance to have been the earliest; there seem to be rea-

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sons for believing that such a transformation had been effected in familiar Arthurian narrative, even at the time when Crestien wrote.

It has been observed that the tale of Lancelot and the wife of Arthur is but the repetition of that of Tristan and the queen of Mark of Cornwall. Yet the contrast is striking; in the older romance the sympathy of the writer is entirely on the side of the lovers. The husband, an average soldier, is an undistinguished figure; no doubts of conscience disturb the peace of his nephew and favorite, whose incestuous passion is conceived to be sufficiently excused by the assumption of magic influence; no idea of expiation mingles with the course of the story, or affects the sentiment with which is regarded its issue. Far different is the later narration; King Arthur, in spite of occasional weakness, is nevertheless the sovereign who is representative of honor and chivalry; the rule of mediæval Christianity is recognized, prescribing penitence as an atonement for sin.

This ethical character is especially prominent in the English poem called Morte Arthur, the work of a contemporary of Chaucer, whose composition is based on a version of the French prose romance. In this narrative, Lancelot, while on his way to the aid of

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Arthur, reaches Britain before he receives information of the final disaster and death of his sovereign. Beside himself with agony, he resorts to the convent in which has taken refuge the queen, with whom he has a pathetic interview, after which he enters on a holy life. The English writer has succeeded in a task which no Frenchman accomplished; condensing the tale, he has related in beautiful verse the conclusion of Arthur's reign, and given to the history a grand close, which will never cease to be cited and admired.

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Idylls of the King

THAT the story of Arthur has become especially familiar to English readers is owing not only to the scenery, but also to the circumstance that an Englishman was able to prepare a compilation of moderate compass which gives an intelligible conception of the king's career. The French romance reciting the death of Arthur, together with the English poem already mentioned, came into the hands of Thomas Malory, and contributed to the narrative which in 1485 was printed under the title of Le Morte Darthur. In addition, Malory used the Queste, and romances relating to Merlin and Tristan, together with other prose compositions in which the poetic spirit of the cycle had been buried by rambling adventures. Out of such a conglomerate it was impossible to produce an interesting whole. The attraction of Malory's work is chiefly owing to the language; only in the conclusion, where he borrowed from the English poem, has his account unquestioned merit. In spite of these inevitable difficulties, and of the consequent want of clearness and sequence, the history continues to be read and frequently printed; apart from the matter, the purity of style, as well as the enthusiasm of

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the compiler, will probably maintain its place as an English classic.

Many writers of verse, and not in England only, have undertaken to cast into poetic form the history of Arthur. In this review, however, it is intended to limit consideration to the broad outlines of the cycle. It will therefore be necessary to notice only the poetry of Alfred Tennyson, who alone has succeeded in obtaining acceptance for his representations, and from whose Idylls of the King most readers derive their knowledge of the tales. The poet found his material in Malory, in the English poem, and in the Welsh stories rendered by Lady Guest; unhappily, he seems not to have possessed acquaintance with the romances of Crestien. He disclaimed any intention of closely following his authorities; on the contrary, he undertook to treat the material with freedom, and to arrange the narration in such manner as to present his idea of a perfect sovereign. In his version, Arthur appears, not as the son of Uther, but as an importation from angel or fairy land. In especial, the conclusion of the history is subjected to essential variations. Instead of incidents related in the French romance, the suspicions of Agravain, the watch at the queen's chamber, the discovery of Lancelot, and his escape,

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the condemnation of the queen, her rescue by Lancelot from the flames to which she has been sentenced by her husband, the slaying of Gawain's brother and consequent feud, the flight of the lovers to the castle of Joyeuse Garde, and its siege by the king, we are shown Mordred peeping over the garden wall, and subsequently lurking under the tower, whither Lancelot has come for leave-taking; refusing the petition of the knight, who desires to escort her to his fortress, Guinevere takes sanctuary at Almesbury, where, after Arthur's landing in Britain, she is visited by the king, who is represented as having prophetic knowledge of his approaching fate, — information employed for the purpose of pointing a moral lesson. It is possible to question, if not the propriety, at least the taste of changes too obviously designed to temper the hot wine of mediæval romance.

One alteration, however, is not to be condoned. In earlier Arthurian stories, the nephew of Arthur had been regarded as the principal hero of the Round Table. Poets desirous of introducing a new candidate for favor were accustomed to promote this end by describing the personage whose adventures they treated as the friend or unintentional antagonist of Gawain. A single maker of

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legend, guided by ascetic ethical principles, ventured to impugn this reputation; the author of the Queste spoke with scorn of a cavalier whose name stood for the secular order he abhorred, and the romance of Tristan copied and intensified such censure. In spite of these isolated protests, Gawain continued to be generally regarded as the soul of chivalry, a reputation lasting to the time of Chaucer, who considered the knight as its representative.

Tennyson wished to introduce a character able to furnish a contrast to the erring Lancelot and noble Arthur, typifying the vulgar and superficial life of a gay court; such a personage he found in Gawain. Accordingly, he ventured to introduce the model of chivalry in the inconsistent rôle of a tale-bearer and newsmonger. Worse still, taking a suggestion from Dante, it pleased him to parody a scene in the English mediæval poem, where the king, before his final encounter with Mordred, is visited by the ghost of Gawain. The object of the apparition is to warn the king that the battle set for the morrow must be postponed, on penalty of ruin; in his advent, Arthur's nephew is surrounded by the blessed spirits of the lords and ladies, whom, in the course of his career as ally of the forsaken,

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he had been able to succor in time of need. The modern writer also brings on the scene the soul of the champion, but as a visitor from Hell rather than Paradise, blown forever "along a wandering wind," presenting himself for no useful purpose, but arriving only to take leave of his lord and announce his own destiny, a doom befitting one described as "light in life," and "light in death." Had he been acquainted with his great predecessor, Tennyson might have found that Wolfram, when desirous of comparing temporal and spiritual knighthood, chose Gawain as representative of the former, without for that reason finding it necessary to disparage his worth. Surely, in view of the wanton and unnecessary nature of the libel, the spirit is entitled to his remedy, and action for defamation of character should lie before the high court of criticism.

It is by no means intended, however, to censure the Idylls, which contain charming verse, although in the judgment of the present writer to be classed as subordinate to the poetry of Crestien, Wolfram, and the unknown English minstrel, who in three languages have dealt with the material in such way as to insure lasting recollection.

A brief sketch has been given of the man-

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ner in which the more familiar productions of the cycle seem to have been developed. In this case, as would appear likely, literature preceded myth, humanity came before miracle. Among many poetical narratives, the genius of Crestien obtained preference for his romances; these, episodical in their relation to the history, gave no conception of the story as a whole. The path was therefore open for reconstruction; in virtue of a development of which his own work was the point of departure, the portraits of the minstrel were daubed with huger but vaguer figures, in such wise as to obscure his composition. In the end, even his name was forgotten, and his poems abandoned to a neglect from which they have not yet entirely been rescued.

In view of the recency of his restored fame, it will require time to determine the place of Crestien in general literature. The opinion has been expressed that these romances, although plainly belonging to a different category, will remain as much a recognized treasure as the Homeric epos. Doubtless, in respect of language, such rank can hardly be claimed. Arthurian octo-syllables are not hexameters, nor did the trouvère, like the poet of the Divine Comedy, possess speech in which flowers bloom and stars shine. Yet it must be

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borne in mind that of poetry there are many kinds. Modern rhyme, characterized by excessive ornamentation, has become so elaborate as not easily to lend itself to purposes of narrative. For story-telling the first requisite is simplicity of style. To our author belonged this virtue; in his day the time had not gone by when a poem might also be a novel. His verse may not be music, may not be philosophy, but is painting.

As early Greek society lives in its heroic verse, so does mediæval France, at least in its courtly aspect, survive in the romantic epos of the French minstrel. He brings before our eyes the hill-set castles, in gray antiquity or recent whiteness, houses nestling at their feet. From the battlements is displayed a fair country, smiling with vineyards and granges; across the bridged river, in savage contrast, extends the lonely forest. The palace stair, the baronial hall, the painted bed-chamber, the rush-strewn tent, are depicted by the hand of one who daily beheld them, and who fully appreciated the picturesque effects of their varying light and shadow. Not less brilliant is the gallery of portraits. Enidè starting at the first glimpse of Erec, Soredamor kneeling before Guinevere, Ewain saluting his unconscious wife, the daughter of Thiébault embra-

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cing the stirrup of her cavalier, Perceval worshipping the knights in the forest or splendidly confronting the gray pilgrims, form pictures of mediæval life which no others can rival. Scene-painting, however, is not everything. To be beautiful, a picture must be more than a picture. In this case, as always, poetry was inspired only by original thoughts. The genius of Crestien was born of enthusiasm, derived from contact with a new society, open to gentle emotions; as to a source in a lonely forest, he showed the path to a clear well of romance, from which mankind will forever drink with pleasure.

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Erec and Enide

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The Hunt of the White Stag

AT Easter, when the year is new, in his castle of Cardigan, King Arthur held a court, the most royal ever seen; present were many knights, hardy and brave, with dames and damsels, daughters of kings, gentle and fair. On a day when the court grew dull, the king said to his knights that he would keep up the ancient custom, and chase the White Stag. Sir Gawain liked not the words. "Sir," he said, "from this hunt you will get no thanks nor grace; the usage we know that to the White Stag belongeth; the man who slayeth the stag, whomsoever it offend, must kiss the fairest lady in all your court; present are five hundred damsels, daughters of kings, gentle and wise, and none without her friend, a knight hardy and brave; right or wrong, each will uphold that she whom he himself preferreth is the fairest of the fair." "Dear nephew, 'tis true, but I will not let it be, for what the king hath spoken is not to be gainsaid. To-morrow morn, with great joy, will we repair to the adventurous forest, to pursue the White Stag. Full of marvels this chase shall prove."

¶ On the morrow, when dawned the day, the king rose early, and donned a short coat, to

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ride in the wood; he bade his knights be waked and his hunters saddled; all mounted and departed, with bows and arrows. After they were gone, the queen took horse; she rode a white palfrey, and was attended by one of her maidens, a king's daughter. A knight named Erec saw them go, and spurred after; he belonged to the Table Round, and had earned great honor since he had been in the court, so that no knight was more lauded; in no land could be found a fairer; he was handsome and brave, and not yet five and twenty. He was wrapped in an ermine mantle, and wore a coat of diaper woven in Constantinople; his boots were of a rich cloth, and he was shod with golden spurs; but he carried no arms, save only his sword. At the turn of a road he overtook the queen: "Lady, I will attend you, if it pleaseth you; I came for no other purpose than to keep you company." "Fair friend, be sure, I like your company; I could find no better." They rode fast, and came straight to the forest, where the hunters had roused the stag; some blew, some hallooed, and the hounds bayed after the quarry, while the archers shot flights of arrows; the king, on a Spanish hunter, was foremost in the chase.

¶ Queen Guinevere, with Erec and the dam-

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sel, halted and listened; but the hunt was so far away they could make out neither horn nor hound. They halted in a clearing by the side of the track; and it was not long before they saw approaching a knight on a charger, fully armed, beside whom rode a fair maiden, while in front went a crooked dwarf, bearing a knotted scourge. The queen admired the knight, and wondered who he could be. "Girl," she said, "bid yonder knight come, and bring his damsel." The maid ambled; but the cross dwarf met her, scourge in hand. "Stop, damsel! What seek you? You must go no farther." "Dwarf, let me pass! I must speak with yonder knight, for the queen hath sent me." The peevish dwarf blocked her road: "Here you have no errand! Back! You are not fit to accost so good a knight." The girl would have forced her way, for she scorned the dwarf, seeing how little he was; but when he saw her approach, he raised his thong and smote her on the back of the hand, so that it left a red mark. Lief or loath, the damsel could do no more; she returned, tears coursing down her cheeks. When the queen perceived her maiden hurt, she was at a loss: "Ha, Erec, fair friend, I am sorry for my girl, whom this wicked dwarf hath beaten; churlish is the knight, to let

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such a monster harm a creature so fair. Sweet friend, go, bid him come hither, fail not; I wish to know him, himself and his friend." Erec spurred; but when he saw him draw near, the dwarf went to meet him: "Vassal, stand back! here I know not your errand!" "Begone, tiresome dwarf! You are too cross and contrary! Let me pass!" "You shall not!" "I will!" "You shall not!" With that, Erec thrust aside the dwarf; but he, who was fell, raised his thong and smote Erec on the neck, and in the face, so that the welt showed from cheek to cheek. Erec knew that by blows there was naught to be gained, for he saw that the armed knight was rude, and he feared to be slain if before his eyes he beat his dwarf; rashness is not courage. He returned, and said: "Lady, now 't is worse; this bad dwarf hath spoiled my face. I dared not touch him, but none hath right to blame me, for arms had I none, and I dreaded the knight, who is churlish and outrageous; he would not jest, but kill me in his pride. I promise you, if I can, I will avenge my shame, or increase it; my arms will not avail me, I shall not get them against my need; this morn, when I came away, I left them at Cardigan; if I went to seek them, I should never overtake the knight, for he

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rideth fast. I must follow him, far or near, until I find a man of whom I can hire arms, or who will lend them to me. If I get them, the knight will find me ready to do battle; be assured, we shall fight until he master me, or I him. If I can, I will arrive on the third day; you will see me at the castle, glad or grieved. Lady, I may tarry no longer; I commend you to God." The queen, on her part, a hundred times bade him be in the keeping of God, with prayers that he might be delivered from harm.

℄ Erec departed, and the queen remained in the forest, where the king had overtaken the stag, for no other was in at the death. They returned to Cardigan, bearing the venison; and after supper, when the barons were merry in hall, the king declared, that since he had captured the stag he would take the kiss, to make good the custom. Then rose a murmur, while every knight said to his neighbor, that it would not pass without controversy of sword or ashen lance, for each was prepared to prove, by dint of blows, that his own friend was fairest in the hall. When Sir Gawain heard, be sure he was vexed; he took the king to speech, and said: "Sir, in dismay are your knights; all speak of this kiss, and affirm that it will not be given without quarrel and strife."

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Of his wisdom, the king returned: "Fair nephew, counsel me, save my honor and right, for uproar I would not have."

¶ To counsel ran the best barons, King Ider first, and after him King Cadwallon, wise and brave, with Kay and Girflet, King Amangon, and other barons enow. The debate lasted until the queen appeared, and recited the adventure of the armed knight, whom she had met in the wood, and the felon dwarf, that had scourged her girl and struck Erec, who had gone after to avenge his shame; and she cried: "Sir, delay a little, for my sake! If these barons agree, defer the kiss until the third day, when Erec will arrive."

All gave consent, and the king acceded to her suit.

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The Maid in the White Gown

EREC followed the armed knight and the dwarf who had hurt him, until they came to a fair castle, and entered at the gate. There was merrymaking in that castle, of knights and fair ladies; in the streets, some carried falcons and tercels, and others played dice and hazard; before the stables grooms were currying steeds, and ladies tiring themselves in their bowers. When they set eyes on the knight, with his maid and dwarf, folk trooped to meet him, by twos and threes, but Erec none saluted, for no man knew him. He paced after the knight, who reached his inn; when Erec had seen him lodged, he was greatly delighted. A little further, within a courtyard, seated on a flight of steps, he perceived a white-haired lord, who looked poor but noble, and sat apart, as if deep in thought. Erec, who took him to be gentle, and thought that he would harbor him, entered the court; before he had spoken a word, the vavassour saluted him, and cried: "Sir, welcome; if you will deign to lodge with me, your hostel is ready." "Sir, your mercy! 'T is therefore I came; to-night I am in need."

℄ Erec dismounted, while the master of the house took the rein, and led in the horse, to

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honor his guest. He summoned his wife and fair daughter, who were busy in a work-room; what they were doing, the tale sayeth not. The lady issued, followed by the maid, who wore a white shift, loose and frayed, under a white gown; 't was all she had on; the gown was so old that it was pierced at the sides; without the dress was poor, but within the life was fair; gentle was the girl, for in her making had Nature taken pains, and wondered at herself a hundred times, how she could have created a thing so lovely; try all she might, she could never succeed in producing a copy. Iseut the blonde possessed not hair so golden; her brow was whiter than the lily-flower, and against the white her face illumined with the fresh vermeil that Nature had bestowed; her eyes shone like twin stars. God never bettered such lips or cheeks; her beauty was mirror-bright.

℄ When she set eyes on the knight, she started, because he was a stranger; this made her ashamed, and she blushed; Erec, on his part, was abashed at the view of so great beauty. The vavassour said: "Fair dear child, take this horse and put him up with mine; remove his bridle and saddle, and give him hay and oats; curry him and rub him down, so that he be well groomed." The girl took

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the steed, unlaced the breastplate, and undid saddle and bridle; she put a halter on his head and groomed him; she brought him to the crib, and set before him hay and oats, fresh and sweet; after that she returned to her father who said: "Fair dear child, take this lord by the hand, do him honor, and lead him up." The maid did not hesitate, for she was well-bred; she took Erec's hand and guided him to the hall, whither her mother had already gone to tapestry the benches, where they seated themselves, Erec and his host on one side, and the maiden on the other; in front burned a bright fire. Women there were none, but a single man-servant made up the household; in the kitchen he prepared supper, stewed meat and roast fowls; when all was ready, he brought water in two basins; table and cloth, bread and wine, were soon provided, and they began their meal.

¶ After supper, when they had risen from the table, Erec asked his host: "Tell me, fair sweet friend, why goeth your daughter so meanly clad, fair and discreet as she seemeth?" "Fair friend," answered the vavassour, "poverty is the plague of most folk, and mine; I am sorry to see her so ill attired, but I cannot help it; I have spent my time at the wars, and sold and mortgaged all my land. Howbeit,

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she would be well drest if I would let her take all the presents people wish to make her; the lord of this castle would clothe her, and do all for her, for he is a count, and she his niece. In the whole country is no baron, however mighty, who would not marry my daughter, if I would agree; but I look for better things, and am waiting to see whether God will not grant her greater honor, and Fortune send some king or count to take her away; no count or king beneath the skies need be ashamed of my daughter, who is so fair that her peer is not to be found; beautiful she is, but her goodness is better than her beauty; God never made a girl so wise and brave. When my daughter is at my side, I care not a rush for the world; she is my mirth and my joy, my comfort and my solace, my having and my treasure, and there is nothing I love so dearly as herself."

¶ When Erec had heard his host's story, he inquired whence came the crowd that filled the castle, for no street was so mean as not to be thronged with knights, ladies, and squires. The vavassour answered: "Fair friend, these are the barons of the countryside; young and old, they have come for the sake of a feast to be held on the morrow; therefore it is that the inns are so full. When they are gathered,

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the tumult will be great; in the public place, on a silver perch, will be set a hawk of five or six moultings, the fairest to be found; the man who desireth the bird must possess a fair friend, gentle and stainless; if any knight be so bold as to demand the prize of beauty, he may bid his companion advance and remove the hawk; this custom they maintain, and therefore assemble, year after year." Erec asked: "Friend, if it be no trouble, tell me, if you know, who is a knight armed in azure and gold, that passed but now with a fair maid, who rideth close, and a crooked dwarf?" "'T is he, of a certainty, who will get the hawk; he hath taken it twice, and never been challenged; if he obtain it now, 't will be his to keep; doubtless he will receive it without controversy."

℄ Erec returned: "Yonder knight, I love him not. Know that if I had arms, I would dispute with him the hawk. Fair friend, out of your frankness, and for my guerdon, advise me how I may be provided with arms, old or new, foul or fair." His host replied: "Have no fear! I possess good arms, which I will blithely lend, a smooth hauberk and light boots, a fair helmet and strong shield; sword and lance I will supply; there will be naught to say." "Sir, your mercy! but I desire no

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sword better than I have brought, nor steed other than mine own; if you will loan the surplus, it will be great kindness; but I desire another gift, for which I will recompense you, if God grant me the honor of the battle." His host answered frankly: "Ask with confidence whatever you desire; you shall not go unfurnished with aught that is mine."

¶ Then Erec said, that he wished to obtain the hawk for his host's daughter, for never had he seen a maid a hundredth part as lovely; if she went with him, he would have reason to affirm that she it was who ought to receive the hawk. He added: "Sir, you know not whom you have lodged, of what rank or race. I am the son of a mighty king; my father is named Lac, and the Britons call me Erec; I am of the court of King Arthur, and these three years have dwelt in his house. I wot not whether to this country hath come report of my sire or myself; but I promise, if you will provide me with arms and bestow on me your daughter, to-morrow to conquer the hawk, that if God bless me with victory, I will carry her to my realm; she shall wear a crown and reign queen of three cities." "Fair sir, is this true? Are you Erec, son of Lac?" "Assuredly, the same."

¶ The vavassour rejoiced, and cried: "We

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have heard of you in this land; I love and esteem you, for I know you to be daring and brave; by me you shall not be refused; I place my fair daughter wholly at your disposition." With that he grasped her by the hand: "Take her," he said, "I give her to you."

℄ Erec received her with delight; now he had all he wanted. The father was glad, and the mother wept for joy; the maid sat still, but she was pleased that she had been given away, for she saw that the guest was courteous, and she knew that he would be a king, and she herself a queen honored and crowned.

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The Hawk on the Silver Perch

BY this it was late; the beds were made, with white sheets and soft counterpanes. Without more words, all went to repose, in great joy. That night, Erec slept little; when day broke, he rose, and his host also; they repaired to the monastery, where they caused a hermit to sing mass, and were mindful of the offering; after service, they did obeisance to the altar, and returned to their hostel.

¶ Erec was keen for the fray; he called for his arms, and they were brought. The maid herself armed him, using no spell nor charm; she laced his iron boots, binding them with deerskin straps; she put on the brown helmet, and belted his brand. She bade his steed be fetched, and at a bound he leapt into the saddle; she handed his lance, and he leaned it against the saddlebow. At length he said to the gentle vavassour: "Fair sir, so please you, array your daughter! I wish to take her to the hawk, as you have agreed." The father bade be saddled a bay palfrey; no need to describe the harness, which showed the poverty of the house. Bareheaded and coifless, the girl mounted, and needed no urging. Erec would wait no longer; he set out, his host's

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daughter at his side, while her parents ran after.

¶ Erec rode, lance erect, the fair maid on his right. In the streets, great and small eyed them, wondering one to another: "Who is yonder knight? He ought to be brave, to take the pretty girl! His pains will not be wasted; he hath reason to maintain, that 't is she who ought to get the hawk." So said some, but others exclaimed: "Who is the knight that bringeth the fair maid?" "I do not know, I do not know; but his brown helm, and his shield, and brand of burnished steel become him, and he sitteth his horse well; he seemeth a brave vassal; he hath good arms, and legs, and feet."

¶ While folk stared, the twain rode, until they reached the public place, where they halted, and stood on one side. Presently they saw the knight, with his dwarf and maiden; he had heard that a knight had come, who demanded the hawk, but he did not believe that the world contained a man bold enough to cope with him, and if there were such, he was sure of having the best. The people gave him joy, and escorted him; at his heels ran a rout of knights and servants, dames and damsels. He went in front, with his girl and dwarf, and rode toward the hawk in great pride; but

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about stood such a throng of the common people, that he could not get near. The count of the city came, with a rod in his hand, and menaced the churls, who fell back, while the knight advanced, and cried to his maiden: "My damsel! this bird, so smooth and fine, is yours by right, for you are gentle and fair; so it is, and so shall be, as long as I live; fair friend, proceed, take down the hawk." With that, the girl put forth her hand; but careless of the danger, Erec ran up: "Damsel, begone! Please yourself with some other bird, for to this you have no right; whoever is vexed, yours it shall not be; 't is needed by a better than you, one fairer and more courteous!" The knight was incensed, but Erec recked not, and said to his damsel: "Fair, advance! Take the bird, for yours it ought to be; if any dispute it, I will avouch it to be true; no lady is your rival, in beauty or worth or freedom or honor, more than the moon compareth with the sun!"

¶ When he heard himself defied, the other would not endure it. "Vassal," he cried, "who art thou, that challengest the hawk?" Erec answered boldly: "I am a knight of another land, who have come to get this hawk; whomsoever it grieve, this damsel ought to receive it." "Begone! that shall never be;

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't is madness hath brought thee hither! If thou desirest the hawk, it shall cost thee dear!" "Cost me, how?" "Thou must do battle with me, unless thou resign it." "'T is idle menace; I fear you not." "Then, I defy thee; without combat, this shall not pass." Erec responded: "God grant it! 't is even what I desire."

¶ The place was wide and open, while folk stood all about; the two knights withdrew a rood, and rushed together, aiming their iron glaives; they met so fiercely, that shields were pierced, and lances shivered; behind, saddle-bows gave way, and the knights lost their stirrups, while their horses galloped free over the field. Both leapt up, and drew swords, wherewith they dealt mighty blows; all they touched, they cleft; shields were splintered, and mail parted, while armor became red with gore. The encounter lasted a long time, until both grew weary.

¶ "Vassal," cried the knight, "let us refresh ourselves, since we grow weak; better blows must we deal, for the afternoon waxeth late; shame and dishonor it is that this encounter endureth so long. Behold yonder fair maid, how she weepeth, and sweetly beseecheth God for thy sake, even as doth mine for me. We must put strength into our brands, for our

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friends' cause." "You have said well," answered Erec; and they rested. Erec gazed on the damsel who prayed for him, and his strength returned; her love and beauty filled him with pride. He remembered the pledge he had made the queen that he would avenge his disgrace, or increase it. "Ha, wretch!" he thought, "why do I delay? I have not yet requited the outrage this vassal permitted, when his dwarf smote me in the wood!" In indignation, he summoned the knight: "Vassal, I challenge you! we have reposed too long." The other responded: "I am ready." ℭ They began anew; at the first onset, the knight struck Erec over the shield, so that the blade shore away part of the helm, and, glancing from the white cap, cleft the shield to its centre, and cut away a span of the hauberk, so that the cold steel wounded the haunch; that time, God saved him; had not the sword swerved, he would have been cleft in two. Undismayed, Erec paid in kind; he dealt on the helm, so hard that he stunned his foe; in a thought, with three strokes, he quartered the helmet, and clove the cap; the blade bit the skull, but touched not the brain. The knight tottered; Erec pushed him, and he fell toward the right; Erec tore away the helmet, and unlaced the ventail, baring the face; when he

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remembered the insult of the dwarf, he would have taken the knight's head, unless he had sued for quarter. "Ha, vassal, thou hast conquered me, mercy! It would be shameful to slay me now; take my sword, I yield it." Erec refused, and cried: "Well, if I slay thee not." "Ha, gentle knight, why hast thou cause to hate me to the death? I never saw thee, nor harmed thee, that I know." "Aye, so hast thou done." "Ha, sir, tell me how? If I have wronged thee, I will do thy pleasure."

℄ Erec said: "Vassal, I am the man who yesterday was with the queen, when thou didst let thy dwarf beat my lady's girl; 't is infamy to strike a woman; after that, he smote myself. The dwarf held me cheap; overproud wert thou, to behold such outrage, and allow it, and be pleased with it; for that injury I have right to hate thee. Thou shalt render thyself prisoner, and resort to my lady, whom thou wilt find at Cardigan; thou mayest arrive to-night, 't is scant seven leagues. Put thyself at her will, with thy maid and dwarf, and tell her that to-morrow in joy shall I come, bringing a maid so fair that earth hath not her peer; truly mayest thou say so! and tell me thy name." "Sir, I am called Ider, son of Nut. This morn I believed that none could master myself; now have I met a

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stronger than I. You are a very brave knight. Lo! I plight my troth, that without delay I will surrender myself to the queen. Tell me, hide it not, by what name are you called? Who shall I say hath bidden me go?" "I will tell thee; my name is Erec. Go, and say I sent thee." "I depart, and I promise; myself, with my dwarf and my maiden, will I put wholly at her pleasure, and carry tidings of yourself and your damsel."

¶ With that, Erec took his pledge. The people ran up, the count and his knights; some were glad, and some sorry; the greater part rejoiced, for the sake of the maid in the white gown, the daughter of the poor vavassour, so gentle and frank; but his maiden, and those who loved Ider, were grieved for his sake.

¶ Ider took horse, with his dwarf and damsel, and crossed forest and plain, till he arrived at Cardigan. It so chanced, that in the gallery of the hall were standing Sir Gawain, with Kay the seneschal, and other barons many. The comers they descried, and the seneschal, who was first to make them out, said to Sir Gawain: "Sir, my heart guesseth that the knight who rideth yonder is he of whom the queen spake, that yesterday made her so angry; I think they are three; I see the dwarf and the maid." "'T is true, 't is a girl

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and a dwarf, who ride with the knight; he is armed, but his shield is not entire; if the queen saw him, I think she would know. Seneschal, go call her!" Kay found the queen in her chamber, and cried: "Lady, do you remember the dwarf, who yesterday vexed you, when he beat your maiden?" "I remember him well; why have you mentioned him? Know you aught?" "Lady, because I have seen a knight errant, who rideth armed, and if my eyes deceive me not, he hath with him a girl, and I think the dwarf, who beareth the thong wherewith Erec was hurt." The queen rose to her feet, and cried: "Let us go quickly! If it be himself, I shall know him." "I will point him out; come to the gallery where your knights are standing, and Sir Gawain awaiteth you." The queen made haste, and went to the windows, where she stood beside Sir Gawain; she recognized the knight, and cried: "Sirs, 't is the same; he hath been in great peril; I know not if Erec hath avenged his harm, or if he hath vanquished Erec; he hath received store of blows, so that his hauberk showeth more red than white." "'T is true," said Sir Gawain; "we shall hear news that will make us glad or grieved; either Erec sendeth him to your prison, or he cometh out of hardihood, to

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boast that he hath conquered Erec, or slain him." "I think so," cried the queen; and all agreed that it might well be.

¶ Ider entered at the gate, bearing his message; all descended from the gallery and went to receive him. He rode to the horseblock, where he dismounted; Sir Gawain set down the lady, and the dwarf alighted elsewhere; about stood more than a hundred knights, who led him before the king. When Ider perceived the queen, he bowed to her feet, saluting first herself, after that the king and his knights, and said: "Lady, to your prison sendeth me a knight valiant and worthy, whom yesterday my dwarf lashed with his thong, and who hath vanquished me in arms. Lady, I bring the dwarf, with myself and my damsel, that you may work on us your will." "Tell me, when will Erec arrive?" "To-morrow, lady, and bring a maid so fair that her like have I never seen." "Friend, since thou hast put thyself at my mercy, I wish not to work thee woe. Answer, so God aid thee, what name hast thou?" "Lady, I am called Ider, son of Nut." They knew it to be truth; the queen ran to the king and exclaimed: "Sir, did you hear? You did well to wait for Erec the good knight!" King Arthur returned: "'T is a sooth saying, that he

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who taketh advice is no fool. Lady, if you love me, release the knight on these terms, that henceforth he belong to my household. If he refuse, his be the blame." The king had spoken, and the queen declared Ider free, on condition that he should remain in the court; he did not wait to be urged, but gave his promise; after that, varlets ran up and disarmed him.

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The Parting of the Bride

ON the battle-ground, great and small made much of Erec, and followed him to his hostel with many praises; the count embraced him and cried: "Sir, since you are the son of King Lac, 't is proper that you should lodge in my house; you would do me great honor, for I account you my lord." Erec returned: "Be not vexed; to-night I will not abandon my host, who hath honored me greatly, in that he hath bestowed on me his daughter. Sir, what say you? Is it not a fair gift, and a rich?" "Aye, sir," answered the count, "'t is a fair present; the maid is wise, and of gentle birth; know that her mother is my sister; again I beseech you, to-night be my guest." Erec replied: "Leave me in peace; I will not, for aught that can be said." The count, who saw that prayers were useless, returned: "Sir, your pleasure! Howbeit, this evening I and my knights will escort you, for solace and company." Erec gave thanks, and returned to his hostel attended by the count, with ladies and knights.

¶ When they arrived, the vavassour was pleased; as Erec entered, varlets ran to disarm him; first of all, he himself took his place, and after him, the count and his troop seated

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themselves on beds and cushions. Near Erec sat the count, and the fair maid, who fed with a plover's wing the hawk for which the battle had been fought. She was pleased with the bird and with her lord; she did not conceal her delight, but the whole house saw, and rejoiced in the love of the maiden.

¶ Erec accosted the vavassour, and said: "Fair friend, fair host, fair sir! the honor you have done me shall be richly guerdoned. I would carry your daughter to the court of King Arthur, where I wish to make her my wife. If it pleaseth you to wait, after a little I will send for you, and cause you to be escorted to the country, far away, which is now my father's and one day will be mine. There will I bestow on you two castles, Roadan, ancient as Adam, and Montrevel, no less worth; ere the third day pass, shall I have sent you gold and silver, vair and gray, with silken stuffs of dear cost, to apparel yourself, and your wife, my beloved lady. To-morrow, when dawneth the day, will I take your daughter to court, in the dress she weareth, for I would have my lady the queen attire her in her own robes, of samite and silk in grain."

¶ On the same bench with the maid in the white gown sat a niece of the count, who cried to her uncle: "Sir, it would shame you more

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than another if this lord take your niece in raiment so poor." The count answered: "My sweet niece, prithee give her of your own robes, the best you own." Erec overheard, and cried: "Sir, mention it not; for naught in the world would I have her wear any other garment, save such as the queen shall bestow." The damsel returned: "Ha, fair sir, if it be your pleasure to take my cousin in white shift and white gown, I will make her another gift; I possess three palfreys, better hath no count nor king, chestnut, spotted, and vair. The birds of heaven are no fleeter than the vair; he is such as suiteth a maid; a child may ride him, for he is not restive, and he biteth not, nor kicketh; one fareth as easily as if he floated." Erec responded: "My sweet friend! It liketh me well that she accept this present." The damsel called one of her servants, and bade him fetch the palfrey; the man made haste to saddle and bridle it, decking it as well as he could; after a little while he returned, leading the long-maned palfrey. Erec praised it, for he thought it fine, and bade a servant put it up with his charger. That night, great had been their mirth; the count returned to his hostel, promising to arrive at morn, and accompany Erec on his way.

¶ On the morrow, when day broke, Erec bade

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his horses be saddled, and his fair friend waked. She dressed herself and made ready; not a knight or lady who did not ride in their train. All mounted, and among them the count, at whose side rode Erec and his sweet friend, who did not forget her hawk; 't was all the riches she bore. The count would have sent part of his knights for an escort, but Erec declared that he would take no companion, save only the maid, exclaiming: "I commend you to God!" They had ridden a long way; the count kissed Erec and his niece, commending them to God the Father. The maid's parents kissed her many a time and oft, and did not restrain their tears. At leave-taking wept father and mother, such is love, such is nature, such the affection that nurture bringeth. They wept because of the sweetness and friendship they had enjoyed of their child; yet they knew that she was going to a place where honor awaited her. With tears they commended her to God, and went their way.

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The Kiss

EREC thought the time long until he could arrive at court. He rejoiced in the fortune that had given him a love so fair and wise; the more he looked, the more he liked. At every step he kissed her; he kept close by her side, and refreshed his heart with glances. He admired her blonde tresses, her laughing eyes and clear brow, her face and lips, whose sweetness touched him to the soul; he admired her chin and white neck, her figure and hands and arms; while the damsel on her part cast as many looks on her companion, so frank of eye and loyal of heart.

¶ Toward noon they approached the castle of Cardigan, where knights and ladies had ascended in the gallery to await their arrival; as far as eyes could see they recognized Erec; the queen was overjoyed and the court delighted, for he was a general favorite. The king descended the steps on one side, and the queen on the other; they bade God keep him, giving joy to himself and his friend and lauding her great beauty. King Arthur set Enidè from her palfrey, and led her up to the hall; the queen followed, holding by the hand Erec, who said: "Lady, I bring you my

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maiden and my love, clad in mean attire. As she was bestowed on me, so I bring her; she is the daughter of a poor vavassour; 't is poverty that humbleth many a worthy. Her father is frank, but of small having, and her mother a gentle lady, the sister of a rich count. Not for birth or beauty ought I to disdain the maid; 't is indigence that has worn this white gown, and frayed these sleeves. Yet had it pleased me, she might have been well attired; a lady, her cousin, would have given her an ermine robe, silks vair or gray; but for naught in the world would I consent that she should don other raiment until you had beheld her. Consider it, my sweet lady! You see, she needeth a fair dress." The queen returned: "You have done well! She hath right to my robes, and forthwith will I present her with apparel fresh and new."

℄ Queen Guinevere led the maid to her chamber, and bade a servant fetch the new robe and green mantle, that had been fashioned for herself. The man went, and brought the robe, which was lined with ermine, as far as the sleeves; at points and kerchief it showed half a mark of beaten gold, with stones of many hues. If the gown was rich, costlier was the mantle, bordered with sables, and adorned with golden tassels of an ounce weight, on one

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an onyx, and on the other a ruby, bright as a flaming candle; 't was lined with white ermine, and wrought with crosses of every color, blue, vermeil, and violet, white, yellow, and gray. The queen called for a lace, four ells long, of silk twisted with gold, and caused it to be inserted by a master of his craft; this done, she embraced the maid in the white gown, and cried, frankly: "My damsel! you must change your gown for this robe, worth a hundred marks; another time, I will make you a better present." The girl took the dress, and thanked the queen; two damsels led her to a separate chamber, where she put away her white gown, bidding it be bestowed for the love of God. She girt on the robe, fastening it by a golden brooch; the damsels bound her hair in a silken net, but brighter were her locks than the threads of the gold. On her head they placed a coronet, wrought with flowers of many hues; they busied themselves, until they could find naught to amend: about her neck, a maiden wound a double necklace of golden links. She issued, and came to the queen, who was pleased to find her so fair and well-bred; Queen Guinevere took her by the hand, and led her to the king, who rose to receive them, and the like did the knights of the Round Table, the noblest in the world.

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¶ When the fair stranger saw the knights gazing steadfastly, she hung her head, for she was abashed, and no wonder; the blush became her, so that she seemed more beautiful than before. When the king perceived that she was ashamed, he would not let her go, but took her hand, and gently seated her on his right, while on his left sat the queen, who cried: "Sir, welcome should be the knight who in a foreign country hath won a wife so fair! Now may you take the kiss of the fairest, and I think none will contravene. No man who is sincere will deny that this maid is the gentlest of the damsels here, and in the whole world." The king responded: "'T is true; if no man challenge me, on her will I bestow the honor of the White Stag. Sirs, what is your pleasure? If any man object, let him speak his mind. I am a king; I must not lie, nor consent to villainy, falsehood, or excess; I must observe measure and truth. It belongeth to a faithful king to maintain verity and justice. I wish not to forsake the custom and usage that my line is bound to maintain. You would have reason to be grieved, did I desire to introduce a new law. The rule kept by my sire Pendragon, an upright king and emperor, I ought to follow, arrive what may. Tell me your mind, one and all! Let none

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be slow to speak, whether this maid be not of mine house, and whether 't is not she that is entitled to the Kiss of the White Stag." With one voice, all responded: "Sir, by God and his cross, you may justly grant her the kiss, for she is the fairest of the fair; she owneth more beauty than the sun hath light; you may kiss her, we agree."

¶ When the king perceived that it was the general pleasure, he turned to the maid, and kissed her; she was not silly, she was pleased with the kiss; it would have been ill-breeding had she been offended. Courteously he kissed her before the barons, and said: "My sweet friend! I bestow on you my love; without rudeness, I will love you with heart sincere." Thus was rendered the custom and obligation due to the White Stag.

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The Wedding

AFTER the kiss had been taken, according to the custom of the country Erec remembered his promise; ten pack-beasts, fresh and sleek, he loaded with robes and stuffs, buckrams and scarlets, marks of gold and plates of silver, vair and gray, purples and sables; therewith he sent ten of his knights and servants, bidding them greet the vavassour and his wife, and after they had delivered the goods, convey them to Beyond-Wales, and put them in possession of the two castles, with their rents and rights. The men went their way, and when they had presented the gifts, escorted the couple to that country, whither they came in three days. King Lac said nothing to the contrary, but received them with honor and joy; for his son's sake, he quit claim on the castles, and made the burgesses swear to love and respect their new masters, as much as if they had been their hereditary lords. After all was done, the messengers returned, and brought Erec fair news of his wife's father, and of his own realm.

¶ The time for the wedding was near, for Erec would not wait; he entreated the king that he would grant him leave to be married in his court; King Arthur consented, and

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summoned the kings and counts who were his tenants; not one dared be absent, when Whitsuntide came.

¶ When the king had seen his barons gathered, he was full of delight; to enlarge his court, he bathed a hundred varlets, of whom he wished to make knights; each received a vair robe, of rich Alexandrian cloth, made according to his own device; all were armed in one fashion, and obtained steeds swift and nimble, the worst worth a hundred pounds.

¶ When Erec took his wife, it was necessary to name her; for a lady is not married, save she be called by her proper name. Hitherto none had heard what her name was; it was then made known, for the first time; Enidè was the appellation she had received at the baptistery. The archbishop of Canterbury, who had come to court, conferred the benediction; in all that land no minstrel, able to make any entertainment, but was present at the wedding. There was dancing and tumbling, singing of songs and telling of tales, music of harp and viol, flute and bagpipe; maids danced and sang, and did their best to make merry; no art that causeth gladness, and rejoiceth the heart of man, but might be heard on that day. No door was barred, but all approaches open; turned away were neither rich nor poor;

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King Arthur enjoined on his cooks and butlers, that in plenty should they furnish bread, wine, and venison; no man called for aught, that he obtained not in abundance.

¶ That night, bishops and archbishops were gathered; the queen had taken charge of the bedding of the bride, for dearly she loved them both. The thirsty stag not so hotly panteth for the well, the hungry falcon not so keenly stoopeth to the lure, as this pair were fain to encounter; that night, they made amends for delay. When emptied was the chamber, to every member they gave its due; first came looks, those messengers of love, that carry tidings to the heart, so pleased are they with what they behold; and after these, sweet kisses, better worth, that love introduce; this delight they essayed, and therein watered their hearts, yet scarce could drink to the full; the affection that was between them so emboldened the girl, that she feared naught; on the morn, when she awoke, she had lost the name of maiden, and became a new-married lady. That day were jongleurs pleased, for all were paid to desire, with many a fair gift, robes of vair and ermine, coney-skins and violets, silks and sables; to one a steed, to another pence, each according to the measure of his skill. A fortnight the wedding lasted,

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and on the third week the barons undertook a tournament; Sir Gawain came forward, and pledged himself to do battle between Evroic and Tenebroc, while Meliz and Meliadoc contracted for the other side; with that, the court took leave.

¶ A month after Whitsuntide, the tourney was held in the plain below Tenebroc. On the field might be seen many a banner, vermeil and blue and white, many a wimple and sleeve given for love; knights bore lances, rose and silver, gold and azure, banded and vair; laced were helmets of steel and gold, green, yellow, and scarlet gleamed in the sun, in view was many a white hauberk and sword on the left side, many a shield fresh and new, of silver, rose, and azure bossed with gold; many a steed, chestnut and pied, fawn and white and black and bay. With a crash, ranks rushed together; lances were shivered and shields pierced, mail gave and parted, knights fell and horses foamed. At the head, on a white charger, rode Erec, against whom charged the Proud Knight of the Plain, on an Irish horse; Erec smote him on the breast, over the shield, so that he cast him on the earth; he left him lying, and spurred forward. To meet him came Raindurant, son of the Old Dame of Tergallo, in blue sendal; the two

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exchanged mighty blows on the shields that hung from their necks; with an unbroken lance, Erec flung him on the hard ground. As he returned, he met the King of the Red City, a brave knight; reins they clutched by the knots, and shields by the straps; they encountered with such force that lances broke, shields jostled, and horses clashed together; surcingle and rein could not help the king, who went down, clinging to the bridle, while all men cried that it had cost him dear to meet so good a knight. Erec paused not to take him, but spurred forward; ranks broke before him, and horses and knights he took, while his prowess encouraged his friends. In the mellay, Sir Gawain bore himself bravely, capturing men and steeds; Guincel he unhorsed, and Gaudin of the Mount. Brave were Girflet son of Do, Ewain, and Sagramore the Unruled; the party of the field beat back the side of the town, taking and unhorsing many. At the gate of the castle, the strife was renewed; Sagramore was overthrown, and already taken, when Erec rushed to the rescue; one he smote on the breast and hurled from his seat, breaking his own lance; after that, with drawn sword, he beat helms, till his foes fled, and the boldest were afeared; Sagramore he rescued, and drove the insiders into

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the castle; with that ended the day. If Erec had done well on the first day, he exceeded on the morrow; he overcame so many knights, and emptied so many saddles, that no man would have believed who had not seen. All affirmed that his lance and sword had gained the victory; his name became so famous, that no other was mentioned; he was called beautiful as Absalom, and wise as Solomon, brave as a lion, and generous as Alexander.

¶ When the tourney was at an end, Erec thanked the king, and asked leave to repair to his own country, taking his wife. King Arthur could not refuse, though he would not have it be; he prayed Erec to return as soon as he might, for in all his court was no worthier cavalier, save only Gawain, his dear nephew, with whom none could compare.

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Carnant

WHEN Erec had permission to depart, he retained sixty knights, whom he supplied with steeds, and with furs vair and gray; after his preparations were finished, he would stay no longer; he took leave of the queen, and commended to God the knights of the Round Table. The queen gave him leave; at the hour of prime, he parted from the palace; first of all, he mounted his vair charger, and his wife the vair palfrey she had brought from her country; after them, the household took horse, four score men, what with knights, what with servants. They crossed hills and slopes, forest and plain, during four days, and on the fifth arrived at Carnant, where King Lac was sojourning in a delectable castle, furnished with woods and prairies, vineyards and granges, rivers and orchards, brave varlets and generous clerks, fair maids and potent burgesses.

¶ Before Erec arrived, he had sent in advance two knights, to let the king know; when his father heard the news, he bade knights and damsels take horse, and gave orders that horns should be blown and streets draped, in order to receive his son; after that, he himself mounted. In his train went four score clerks,

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men gentle and honorable, wearing gray mantles bordered with sable, five hundred cavaliers, on horses bay, chestnut, and pied, and burgesses and dames more than could be reckoned. These rode and ran, till the companies encountered, and the king and his son recognized one another; both alighted, kissing and greeting, and for a long time did not quit the spot. The king left Erec, and turned to Enidè; he kissed and embraced both, and could not tell which pleased him most. Joyously they entered the castle, while the church-bells rang tumultuously; the streets were spread with rushes, mint, and lilies, and curtained with diaper and samite, while the folk thronged to behold their new lord; never was greater joy.

¶ First of all, they went to the monastery, where they were received with procession; Erec knelt at the altar of the crucifix, while two barons led Enidè before the image of Our Lady; after she had finished her prayer, she crossed herself, and drew back a little, in the manner of a well-bred dame. On that, they issued from the church, and went to the palace, where the mirth began. That day, Erec received many a present from knights and burgesses, palfreys of Norway and cups of gold, goshawks and brachs and leverets,

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horses of Castile, shields and banners and swords and helmets. All men strove to serve him, and made yet more of Enidè, because of her great beauty, and by reason of her frank nature. She sat in a chamber, on a cloth of Thessaly, surrounded by many a gentle dame; but as the clear jasper outshineth the gray pebble, and as the rose surpasseth the peony, thus Enidè was fairer than any dame or damsel, though the round earth had been searched for her mate, so gentle and discreet and courteous was she. Search who might, no unworthiness could be noted; all loved her for her frankness' sake, and he who could serve her thought himself a happy man;

none blamed her, for there was
no fault to be found.

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Enidè's Disgrace

EREC loved her so dearly, that he ceased to carry arms, or take part in tournaments; he set his heart on kissing and caressing her, and made her his mistress and lady; oft it was noon before he rose from her side. Among themselves his barons fretted, and complained that he was too deeply in love; but whoever was vexed, it pleased himself. Though he scarce went out of her sight, he was generous to his knights, and furnished them with arms and pence, to attend tourneys, wherever such were held; howbeit, his barons said it was great shame that he had given up arms, so valiant as he used to be; he was blamed on every side, by knights and servants, until it came to the ears of Enidè, how the folk said that her lord had altered, and become recreant to chivalry. This grieved her, but she dared not show it, for she thought her lord would not like it if she told him.

¶ So it remained secret, until a morn when the two were lying arm in arm, and lip to lip, like dear lovers, he asleep, and she awake. Enidè bethought herself of the words which the people had spoken of her lord; when she remembered them, she could not help bursting

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into tears. In her distress, she said a thing for which she afterwards blamed herself, but she meant no harm. She eyed her husband from head to foot, studying his strong make and clear color, and burst out weeping so passionately, that her tears fell on his breast. "Alas!" she cried, "why did I ever quit my country? What came I hither to seek? Would that the earth had swallowed me sooner, since the best of knights, more frank and courteous than ever was count or king, hath forsaken chivalry, for my sake! I would not have had it happen for aught in the world!" She added: "Alas for thee!" and after that she held her peace. Erec, who was not fast asleep, heard it in his dream; he awoke, and wondering to see his wife in tears, he cried: "Tell me, fair sweet love, why weep you? What grieveth you? Indeed, I must know. Tell me, sweet love, hide it not; why did you say, 'Alas for me?' 'T was of myself you said it, not of another; I heard what you said." Enidè was in despair: "Sir, I know not what you mean." "Lady, why evade? Concealment will not avail; I see, you have wept; 'tis not for naught; in my sleep I heard your words." "Fair sir, methinks it was a dream." "You put me off with lies; your repentance will come too late, if you tell

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not the truth." "Sir, since you press me, I will tell you, I will conceal it no longer, though I fear you will be vexed. In this land all folk declare 't is a shame that you have given up arms. Once they affirmed that earth contained no better knight; now, great and small mock you, and call you recreant. Think you it grieveth me not, to hear you slighted? Indeed, it doth grieve me, and the more, because 't is on me they put the blame; they say, and it is true, that I have taken you in, so that you have lost your honor, and care not to maintain it. You must change, and consider how you can abate this censure, and recover your former fame. Too long have I heard you accused, and dared not let it be known; ofttimes, when I remembered it, I could not refrain from tears; I was so sad that I forgot myself, and said, Alas for thee." "Lady," he cried, "you were right, and they who blame me are right. Now array yourself, and prepare for a journey. Rise, don your richest robe, and bid them saddle your best palfrey."

℄ Enidè rose in dismay, chiding herself for her folly. "Ha, silly fool! I was too much at mine ease, I had all I wanted. God, what made me say so shameful a thing? Did not my lord love me? Alas, only too much. Now

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I must go into exile, and what grieveth me most, alas, is that I shall never see my lord, who loved me more dearly than aught else in the world. The best man who ever was born was so devoted to me that he cared for nothing beside. My pride hath led me astray; I shall suffer for my pride, and it is right that I suffer; we know not when we are well off, until misfortune arrives." So speaking, she arrayed herself in her best, but nothing pleased her; she sent a damsel to bid one of her squires saddle her Norwegian palfrey; the man made haste, and brought the vair.

℄ Erec bade a squire fetch his arms; he went up into a gallery, where he caused a carpet to be spread; the squire ran, and brought the armor, while Erec seated himself on the figure of a leopard, designed on the rug. First of all, were laced his boots of polished steel; next, he donned his hauberk, so precious that it could not rust, for it had not a needle's weight of iron, but was wrought of tiny silver rings, so deftly that it was no heavier than a silken coat. His knights wondered why he took arms, but none durst inquire. "Varlet," he said, "run to the chamber where my wife is, and tell her she keepeth me; she taketh too long; bid her make haste, for I am waiting." The youth obeyed, found Enidè apparelled, and cried:

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"Lady, why so slow? My lord is waiting, armed with all his arms; he would long ago have been in the saddle, had you been ready." Enidè wondered, but like a wise woman held her peace; she descended as fast as she could, and found Erec in the court.

℄ King Lac, with his knights, ran out of the palace, while every man implored leave to go; but Erec declared that he would have no comrade, save only his wife. The king was in great distress: "Fair son, what meanest thou to do? Thou oughtest to tell me thine errand. If thou hast undertaken to do battle with a cavalier, man against man, 't is no reason why thou shouldst not take part of thy people, for riches and signory; a king's son ought not to ride alone. Fair son, bid thy mules be freighted, and take twenty or thirty of thy knights, with silver and gold, and all that befitteth a nobleman." "Sir, it may not be. I will carry neither spare steed, gold, nor silver, nor any companion save my wife. I entreat you, if I perish and she return, for my sake love and cherish her, and bestow on her the half of my land without dispute, to hold so long as her life may endure." "Fair son, I promise; but it grieveth me to see thee depart alone; with my consent, it shall never be." "Sir, needs must be so; I commend you to God; have a

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care of my knights, bestow on them steeds and arms, and all that cavaliers require." The king could not restrain his tears; ladies and knights lamented, and some swooned on the spot. To comfort them, Erec said: "Sirs, why weep you so bitterly? I am not yet taken or maimed; this grief will naught avail. If I go, I shall return, when it please God, and if I may. Knights and ladies, one and all, I commend you to God; give me your leave, for you keep me; it paineth me, to see you sad." Thus speaking, he commended them to God, and they him.

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The Robbers

EREC departed, whither he knew not, on adventure bound. "Go in advance," he said to his wife, "and if you perceive aught, have a care not to let me know. Do not speak, unless I speak first; ride fast, and ride safe." "In good hour, sir," she responded, and proceeded in front, holding her peace. Neither said a word to the other; but as she rode, Enidè grieved in a low voice, so that it might not be heard: "Alas! God exalted me to great joy, and on a sudden He hath cast me down! Fortune, which favored me, hath withdrawn her hand! I should not care, alas, if I durst speak to my lord; but now I am undone, for my lord hateth me. He hateth me, I am sure, for he refuseth to speak to me; and I, for my part, am not bold enough even to look his way." While she lamented, with two comrades from the wood came an armed knight, who lived by robbery; when they saw the palfrey, they coveted it greatly. "Sirs," he asked, "do you know my song? If we prosper not here, we are caitiffs and marvellous wretches. Hither cometh a fair lady; I know not if she be dame or damsel, but she is richly arrayed: palfrey, lorain, and poitral are worth a thousand pounds. I will have the palfrey, and do

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you divide the remainder; the knight shall lead his lady no further; I will make such assault that it shall cost him dear; I was first to espy him, I ought to have the first onset." The others consented and remained behind, for in those days it was not the custom for two knights to set on one; it would have been thought treason.

¶ When Enidè saw the bandits, she was seized with terror. "What shall I do?" she cried to herself; "my lord will be taken or slain, for they are three, and he is one; 't is no fair game, one to three; yonder knight will surprise him, for he is off his guard. Shall I be so cowardly as not dare tell him? I will not be a coward, I will speak." She turned toward Erec and cried: "Fair sir, of what are you thinking? Yonder gallop three knights, who pursue you; I fear they will do you a mischief." "Ha!" he exclaimed, "What have you said? You make little of me; you are bold, to defy my prohibition! This once it shall be forgiven you, but a second time you shall not be pardoned." With that he wheeled and charged the knight, who shouted his warcry; when Erec heard, he defied him. Both galloped, with lances levelled, and met at full speed; but Erec, who had skill in joust, struck so hard, that he drove his lance through the hau-

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berk a foot's length; he drew out the glaive, and the knight fell.

¶ When the second perceived, he quitted his comrade and rode with loose rein, uttering many threats; Eric gript his shield, and they smote each other on the blazons; the knight broke his lance, while Erec ran him through; he left him prostrate and charged the third, who was terrified, and took flight toward the wood; Erec followed at his heels, shouting: "Vassal, turn, or I will strike from behind!" The knight galloped so much the faster, but Erec overtook, and struck him over the painted shield on the right side, so that he cast him down on the reverse; in this manner, of these three, one was slain, one wounded, and the third unhorsed. Erec took the steeds and bound them by the reins; the first was white, the second black, and the third vair. He rode to the spot where Enidè waited, and bade her lead the horses, commanding her, with threats, not to be so bold as to speak unless he gave her leave. She answered: "Fair sir, so please you, I will not." In this manner they proceeded, while she held her peace.

¶ Before they had gone a league, they reached a valley where they encountered five other knights, who rode lances in rest, shields on necks, and helmets laced, for they were in

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quest of prey. When these espied the dame who led three horses, followed by the knight, they made division as if they were already masters of the spoil. One said that he would have the girl, or die; the second chose the vair charger, the third the black, and the fourth the white. The fifth, who was no coward, declared that he would take the knight and his arms, and would make the first assault, if they would consent; they agreed, and he set out at speed, for he had a fleet horse. Erec observed him, but pretended not to see. When Enidè saw, her blood boiled: "Alas, I know not what to do! My lord saith he will work me woe, if I speak to him of aught! Yet if he were dead, I should be miserable and undone. God, my lord perceiveth him not! Silly fool, why do I delay? I prize my words too dear, that I have not told him already! I know that they who come yonder are of evil heart. Yet how shall I tell him? He will kill me. Let him, I will speak." She called gently: "Sir!" "What is it you would say?" "Sir, mercy! From yonder bush have issued five bandits, who terrify me; I am sure they mean to assault you. Four wait, while the fifth rideth fast as his horse will carry him; the rest are near at hand, they will succor him at his need." Erec returned: "'T was ill thought on, when you

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transgressed my command! I knew you esteemed me little! 'T is poor service; I thank you not, but am more angry with you than before. This time I will pardon you, but henceforth have a care, not even to look at me; it would be foolish; I love not your words."

℄ With that he rode at the knight, and they met; Erec struck so hard, that the knight's shield flew from his neck, and his collar-bone was broken; his stirrups parted, and he fell. A second addressed himself, whom Erec took under the chin with his sharp lance, so that the point came out behind the neck; the blood streamed behind and before, and his soul quitted the body. The third, from over a ford, left his lair and entered the stream; before he emerged, Erec overthrew horse and man; the steed fell on the rider, so that the knight was drowned, while the charger scarce escaped. The two who remained resolved to fly, and sped down stream, Erec in pursuit; he smote one in the back, as he leant forward, so that the lance broke and the man fell; in his folly he ventured to rise; but Erec avenged his good lance, for with his sword he dealt three such blows, that he made the blade drink blood; the knight's shoulder was broken, and he sank on earth. The last knew not what to do; he flung away shield and lance, and quitted

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his saddle. When Erec saw him fall, he disdained to touch him; he stooped and raised the weapon, which he bore away; the five horses he tied with the other three, and gave them to Enidè, bidding her ride fast and say naught, lest worse should befall. She made no reply, but went on, conducting the eight steeds.

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THEY rode all day, seeing neither town nor house; when night fell, they took up their quarters under a tree in a plain. Erec bade his wife sleep, while he waked; but she said it should not be, for he needed it more. He consented, and put his shield at his head, while Enidè took her mantle, and wrapt him from head to foot. In this manner, he slept, while she waked, and all night long never closed her eyes, but held the horses by the reins, while she blamed herself for the words she had spoken, and said that she had not suffered half as much as she deserved. "Alas!" she cried, "my pride and my insolence! I might have been sure that there was no knight equal to my own; I knew it, and I know it better now, for I have seen with mine eyes that he feareth neither three nor five. Shame on the tongue that uttered the words, the shameful words, that have brought me into disgrace!" Thus she debated, until the day broke.

℄ Erec rose betimes, and they put themselves on the road, she in front, and he behind. At noon, in a valley, they met a squire, with two varlets, who were bearing wastel-bread and wine, and great cheeses, to the meadows of

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Count Galoain, for those who were cutting his hay. When the squire, who was discreet, saw the strangers, he knew that they must have spent the night in the wood, without food or drink, for within a day's journey there was no castle or stronghold, hospice or inn. He approached them frankly, and said: "Sir, I think you have passed a hard night, lying in this forest; if it please you, refresh yourself with this white bread; I say it not to cozen you, for I ask nothing; the bread is of good wheat, and I have good wine and cheeses, a white towel and fair cups; turn not elsewhere, if you are minded to break your fast; on the sward, beneath these oaks, I would disarm you, if you would rest for a time; I beseech you, alight." Erec put foot to ground, and said: "Fair dear friend, your mercy! I will look no further." The squire wist how to serve; he set down Enidè, while the varlets took charge of the horses, and they seated themselves in the shade. The squire removed Erec's helm, and unlaced the ventail; he spread the towel, handed the bread and wine, and cut the cheese. When the meal was finished, Erec said: "Friend, for a recompense, I give you one of my horses. Take the best, and if it be no trouble, ride to the castle, and engage for me a good lodging." The man returned

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thanks, and untied the steeds; he chose the vair, which he thought most excellent; after that, he mounted by the left stirrup, and made haste to the castle, where he took lodging, and returned, bidding them proceed, for they would be well entertained. Erec mounted, and his wife after; the castle was not far; they went to the inn, where the host received them kindly, and furnished them abundantly with all that they needed.

¶ When the squire had done them what honor he could, he remounted, and rode past the castle, where the count, with three mates, was standing in the gallery. Seeing the vair charger, he asked whose horse he rode; and the squire returned, that it was his own. The count was amazed: "How came you by him?" "Sir, a knight, whom I admire, gave him to me; I conducted him to this castle, where he is lodged with a burgess; he is very courteous, and the handsomest man I ever saw." "I do not believe," replied the count, "that he is better looking than myself." "Indeed, sir," answered the squire, "you are the fairest man in all this country; yet of the knight yonder, I dare to say, that he would be handsomer still, if his mail were not battered. He hath fought in the forest, single-handed against eight knights, and brought off their horses; with

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him cometh a dame so fair, that no lady ever had half her beauty." "I never heard the like; take me to this inn, for I wish to discover whether you have told me the truth." "Sir, willingly; this is the way, 't is not far." They went down from the castle; the squire gave his horse to his master, while he himself ran forward to announce the visit.

¶ With his three companions, the count came to Erec's inn, which was lit with many candles. Erec rose, saying: "Sir, welcome!" and the count returned the greeting. They seated themselves side by side, on a white cushion; the count would have had Erec take service with him, but the latter refused, saying that he had sufficient of his own to spend. While they conversed, the count cast sidelong glances; the lady pleased him so much, that her beauty inflamed him with passion. "Sir," he said, "permit me to speak with yonder dame; take it not ill; I wish to present her my service, for your sake." Erec, who was not jealous, responded: "Sir, sit at her side, and converse with her, if you desire; I give you leave, with all my heart." Enidè sat two lance-lengths away; the count placed himself beside her, on a low stool; she, who was courteous, turned her face toward him. "Lady," he cried, "how it grieveth me to see you so

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wretched! If you would trust me, great good would befall you; your beauty so fine deserveth honor and mastery; if it pleased you, you should be my love, and the mistress of my land. When I deign to ask you, you must not refuse; you would have a good husband, if you remain with me." "Sir," Enidè cried, "your pains are naught; it cannot be. Oh, I would rather be burned in a fire of thorns, and have my ashes thrown to the winds of heaven, than be false to my lord! You have done very wrong to mention such a thing; I would not do it, in any wise." The count grew hot: "Do you disdain me, lady? You are too haughty. Entreat as I may, you will not perform my pleasure. 'T is a true saying, the more a woman is flattered, the prouder she grows; but the man who ill-useth her, findeth her kind. I promise you, there will be swords drawn; I will kill your lord, here before your eyes." "O sir," cried she, "let your deeds be better than your words! It would be too wicked to slay him so! Change your mind, I beseech you; I am yours, and desire to be yours; I said it, not out of pride, but to try whether you loved me sincerely. I would not, for aught in the world, that you should be a traitor; my lord hath no suspicion; if you should destroy him now, it would

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be a treacherous deed, and 't is I who would bear the blame; in this land all men would say that you had done it by my counsel. Sir," she added, "be not so wild; if you wish to take me, to-morrow morn, send hither your knights and servants; my lord, who is brave, will defend me, and you may capture him, or behead him. Too long have I led this life; I am yours, and wish to be yours; since it hath come to this, you may depend on my love." The count responded: "Lady, in happy hour were you born, and with great honor shall you be kept!" "Sir, I believe it; but I would have you promise that you will do as I request; otherwise I will not credit you." The count answered joyously: "Lo! I pledge you my word, loyally, as a count, that I will do all you wish; be not dismayed; you shall desire nothing which you shall not receive." With that, she took his promise; it was to no other purpose than to deliver her lord. Erec and the count commended one another to God, and he went his way.

¶ In a separate chamber, near the ground, were made two beds; Erec slept in one, and in the other lay Enidè, who all night never closed her eyes; but when dawn appeared, she feared that she might tarry too long. She rose, drest herself, and awakened Erec: "Ha,

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sir, mercy! Rise quickly, or you will be betrayed! This count hath proven traitor; he hateth you, for he coveteth me; but if God will, you shall not be taken or slain. Last evening, he would have killed you, if I had not promised to be his love and his wife. You will see him return; he wisheth to keep me, and will destroy you, if he findeth you here." Now Erec knew how faithful she was. "Lady," he said, "let us cause our horses to be saddled, and do you summon our host." The steeds were brought, and Erec donned his arms; the host came, and asked: "Sir, why make you such haste, before the day dawneth, and the sun shineth?" Erec answered, that he had to make a long journey, and said: "Sir, as yet you have received nothing at my hand; but you have done me honor and kindness. Count me quits for these seven chargers, which I have brought; I can give you no more, not a halter's worth." The burgess was overjoyed at the gift, and bowed to Erec's feet, with many thanks. Erec took leave, and mounted; they put themselves on the way; as he rode, he charged Enidè, if she saw aught dangerous, not to apprise him.

¶ Meantime, to the inn came a hundred knights; when they found Erec gone, the count was incensed, for he saw that he had

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been deceived. He saw the hoof-marks, and they followed on the trail; with many oaths the count declared, that if he overtook the knight he would have his head. "Fie on him who feigneth! Ply your spurs! The man shall deserve well, who bringeth me the head of yonder knight!" They set out at full speed, in pursuit of a man who had done them neither good nor evil. At the edge of a wood, they made out the pair. Enidè heard the noise, and perceived that the valley was full of soldiers; she could not refrain from crying aloud: "Sir, see how this count hateth you, to bring such a host! ride fast, until you make yonder wood; perchance we may escape, for they are a long way off; if you ride at this pace, you cannot escape death." Erec replied: "You value me little! Do what I may, I cannot amend you! If God in his mercy suffer me to escape, unless my mind alter, it shall cost you dear!" With that, he looked, and saw the seneschal riding four bowshots in advance, clad in bright mail; he wheeled, and turned on him; the seneschal's shield and mail were no better than brown sendal, for Erec drove his rough spear through.

℄ Next galloped the count, who was a hardy knight; but in his pride, he had vowed to carry no arms, save shield and lance. He

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rushed nine roods in front; Erec turned, and rode at him; the count was first to strike, and aimed so well, that Erec would have lost his stirrups, had he not had a firm seat; the wood of the shield gave way, but his good hauberk saved him. On his part, he smote the count on his yellow shield, so hard that he sent an ell of the lance through his body; with that, he turned, and made for the wood.

℄ So Erec was forested, while the count's men paused over those who were lying on the field; incensed they were, and many oaths they swore, to hunt the knight on the spur, two days or three, until they had taken and slain him. The count, who was sorely wounded, heard what they said: he raised himself a little, and opened his eyes; when he saw what they were about to do, he bade them halt, and cried: "Sirs, I charge you, high and low, great and small, let not one be so bold as to advance a step! Return, forthwith! I have acted wickedly, and I repent of my villainy; the lady who deceived me is noble and wise. Her beauty inflamed me with love; because I desired her, I wished to slay her lord, and detain her by force. 'T was right that evil should befall me, and it hath befallen! Alas, that I should have been so wicked and disloyal! Never was born of woman a better

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knight than he who rideth yonder; he shall suffer no harm through me, while I can prevent it. Return, all!" In discomfort they went home, bearing the dead seneschal on the reverse of his shield; but the count recovered, for his wound was not mortal.

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Guivret the Little

EREC galloped on a track between two woods, his wife in advance; as they issued from a forest, they came to a drawbridge, in front of a high tower, closed by a wall and deep fosse. Swiftly they passed the bridge, but had not proceeded far, before they were espied by the lord of the castle, who was small of person, but bold of heart. When he perceived Erec, he descended from his tower, and bade his men bring out his great war-horse, and put on his saddle emblazoned with golden lions, for he said, that before his barrier had he seen a knight with whom he wished to deal in arms, until he had wearied him out, or himself been made recreant. One of his squires brought the steed, and another the arms; he issued from the gate, and descended the slope, while his strong horse crushed pebbles as a mill grinds corn, and struck sparks until his four feet seemed afire. Enidè heard, and almost swooned from her palfrey; her blood boiled in every vein, and she became pale as death, in despair because she durst not accost her lord. She knew not which part to choose; she debated with herself, and strove to speak, but fear locked her lips. "Sure I am," she cried, "that I shall

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suffer a dreadful loss, if I lose my lord! Shall I tell him, then? I dare not, for if he were angered, he would abandon me in this wood, wretched, lost, and lonely. I shall be yet more unhappy; unhappy, what care I? So long as I live, I shall not lack misery, if my lord endure shame and death. If I acquaint him not soon, yonder knight, who hath an ill look, will slay him ere he is aware. Methinks I have waited too long; he hath forbidden me; I will not be silent, because of his prohibition. I see he hath forgotten himself; I shall do right to warn him." She told him; Erec threatened her, but had not the heart to hurt her, for he saw that she loved him, and he her, as much as could be.

¶ Erec turned against the knight who challenged him; they met at the foot of the hill, and defied each other; they encountered with their sharp spears, so furiously that shields crumpled like bark, and the rings of their mail flew asunder. Both chargers were thrown, and the riders hurt, but not to the death. Swiftly they rose, and withdrew their lances, which were entire; these they flung on the field, and drew their swords from the sheaths. Helmets they smote, till sparks flew, shields splintered, and hauberks parted; if their swords had lasted, they would not

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have fallen back until the one or the other had perished. As she gazed, Enidè was wild with grief; who had seen her wring her hands, and tear her hair, while the tears streamed from her eyes, had known her for a loyal wife.

¶ From tierce till after nones the battle lasted, in such manner that none could have told which had the better. Erec put forth all his strength, and buried his sword in the helm, far as the chaplet, so that the knight tottered; but he recovered himself, and rushed on Erec, whose shield he struck, so hard that his good brand broke; when he saw, in ire he cast away the fragment, for a knight who hath lost his sword is helpless in fray. When Erec pressed him, for God's pity he asked his life. "Mercy, frank knight! Be not fell! Since my sword hath failed, thine is the power, to kill or take me, for defence I have none." Erec responded: "Since thou beseechest me, I will have thee confess that thou art vanquished; put thyself at my pleasure, and I vex thee no more." The knight was unwilling, and to frighten him, Erec ran with drawn sword; he cried in dismay: "You have conquered me, since I must say so." "There is more to be done; you shall not thus go free. Tell me your name and estate, and I will tell

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you mine." "Sir, you say well; I am king of this land. My liegemen are Irish, there is none who is not my tenant; my name is Guivret the Little. No baron that marcheth with me, however proud, who doth not obey me; I wish to know you, and from this time forth be your friend." Erec answered: "I may vaunt myself to be of noble blood; my name is Erec, son of Lac. My father is king of Beyond-Wales; rich cities he hath, and fair castles, more than any sovereign, save only King Arthur, with whom none may vie."

¶ When he heard, Guivret was astonished, and cried: "Sir, I am amazed! Nothing ever pleased me so much as to make your acquaintance; if it pleased you to stay in my manor, you would do me great honor; you should be my lord, tarry as long as you chose. We both need leeching; I have a hold, not eight leagues away; if you will go thither with me, our wounds shall be dressed." Erec answered: "I thank you, but I will not go; I only request, that if I am in necessity, and you hear the news, you will then obey my summons." "Sir, I promise that, so long as I live, I shall never hear of your occasion, but I will come to your aid with all the power I can make." "I can ask no more; you have plighted much; be my lord and friend, if your

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deed matcheth your word." With that, they kissed and clasped; never had fray so stern severance so sweet; out of love and frankness, from his shirt each tore long strips, wherewith they bound one another's wounds, and after the task had been finished, commended each other to God.

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King Arthur's Camp

EREC proceeded, until he reached a lofty forest, full of stags and boars, with wild beasts of every sort. On that day, King Arthur and his queen, with the flower of his barons, had arrived in the same wood; for the king was minded to camp in the wilderness, three days or four, and had brought with him tents and pavilions. Sir Gawain, who was weary with a long journey, had entered the king's tent; under an oak, in front, he had left his shield and lance, and bound his horse to a bough. That way, in great haste, came Kay the seneschal, and borrowed the charger, as if it were on the king's business; after that, he took the lance and shield, that lay under the tree. Down a valley he galloped, until he fell in with Erec, who recognized man and horse, but remained unknown, for blows of spear and sword had worn the color from his shield, and Enidè, for sake of rain and dust, had drawn her wimple. Without salutation, Kay grasped his rein: "Knight, tell me who you are, and whence you come." "You are foolish to detain me; to-night you shall not know." "Be not vexed, 't is for your good I inquire; I see you are sorely hurt. If you will come with me, you shall have fair

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hostel; I will cause you to be eased and honored, for rest you need; in a wood, near at hand, are King Arthur and the queen, with tents and pavilions; in good faith I counsel, that you visit the king and queen, who will make much of you, and do you honor." Erec returned: "You speak fairly, yet go I will not; you know not mine errand; to-night I have further to ride. Release me; I tarry too long, the day is far from spent." Kay rejoined: "You are mad to excuse yourself; methinks you will repent! Come you shall, you and your dame, as the priest attendeth his synod, lief or loath; if they listen to me, to-night you will be poorly served, if they know not who you are; come, I arrest you."

℄ In great disdain Erec replied: "Vassal, do you drag me perforce? You took me without challenge; it was wrong, for I thought myself in safety and I was not on my guard." With that he put hand to sword and exclaimed: "Vassal, let go! I reckon you insolent! I will strike you, if you enforce me further!" Kay released the rein and galloped over the field, more than a rood; then he turned and charged furiously. The two met; but Erec, out of frankness because he saw Kay disarmed, reversed his lance and dealt with the butt, so hard that he drove Kay's shield against his

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temple and pinned his arm to his breast, laying him flat on earth; after that he took the charger by the rein and gave it to Enidè. Kay, who understood how to blandish, besought Erec to return the horse. "Vassal," he cried, "so God help me, part in this steed have I none; it belongeth to a man in whom valor aboundeth, to Sir Gawain the bold. On his part I entreat you to restore his charger for the recompense he will make you; it would be wise, and I will go your messenger." Erec returned: "Vassal, take the horse! If it be Sir Gawain's, I must not keep it."

℄ Kay remounted and rode to the king's tent, where he told the whole story. The king addressed Sir Gawain: "Fair nephew, if ever you were courteous, seek this knight, and lovingly inquire of his estate and errand. Bring him if you may, feign not." Gawain mounted with two varlets; Erec they overtook, but did not recognize him. Salutations were exchanged, and Sir Gawain, who was full of frankness, cried: "Sir, King Arthur and his queen have sent me to greet you, and 't is their petition and commandment, that you join in their sport; it shall help you and not hurt; their camp is not far." Erec answered: "I thank the king and queen, and you, who seem kind and debonair; I am not at mine ease,

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but wounded in the body; yet I will not go out of my road in order to obtain lodging. Tarry no longer; return, your mercy!"

℄ Gawain, who was shrewd, drew back and whispered in the ear of a varlet that he should go to the king and bid him advance his camp three leagues or four, if he wished to become acquainted with the best of knights, who would not leave his road for the sake of shelter. The man obeyed and carried the message; without delay, the king commanded the tents to be struck; the mules were laden, and they went their way. The king rode his pale charger, and after him the queen mounted her white palfrey of Norway. Meantime, Sir Gawain ceased not to detain Erec, who said: "Yesterday rode I further than to-day I shall; Sir, suffer me to depart; you have undone great share of my journey." The other replied: "Be not vexed; I would attend you a little further, the night is far hence." In this manner they proceeded until Erec saw tents in front, and knew that he was lodged. "Ha, Gawain!" he cried; "your craft hath taken me! Since it hath so passed, disguise availeth no more; I will tell my name; 't is Erec, your mate and friend." When Gawain heard, he ran to clasp him, lifting Erec's helm, and unlacing his ventail; with joy he embraced him,

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and Erec did the like. With that, Sir Gawain took leave, and said: "Sir, this news will blithen my lord and lady, and I go to tell them; but first, needs must I solace your wife, my lady Enidè; my lady the queen hath longed to see her; 't was yesterday I heard her say so." So speaking, he turned toward Enidè, and asked if she were sound and well. Courteously she responded: "Sir, no dolor would be mine if I were not in fear for my lord, who hath scarce a limb whole." Gawain returned: "I am sorry; one seeth by his face that he is colorless and pale; I could have wept to have him so altered, save that joy quencheth grief, and in my delight I could not be mindful of pain. Do you amble forward, while I let the king and queen know that you come after; when they hear, their joy will be great." With these words he left them and rode to the tent of the king.

℄ "Sir," he cried, "rejoice, you and your lady, for hither come Erec and his wife." The king leapt for mirth: "Certes, I could hear no news that would please me so much." The queen and the court were overjoyed and ran out of the tents, while the king himself went to meet the guests. When Erec saw the king he alighted, while King Arthur greeted and embraced himself and Enidè; the queen did the

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like, and there was not one who did not show his mirth. On the spot, they stripped Erec of his arms; when they set eyes on his wounds, their glee was changed to sorrow. The king sighed, and bade be fetched an ointment which Morgain his sister had made, of such virtue that let it be spread on any wound, a week would not pass ere nerve and sinew were healed, provided it were spread once a day. The ointment they brought, and after the wounds had been cleansed and bound, the king led the guests to his tent, and begged Erec, for his love, to tarry two sennights, until he were wholly cured. Erec returned thanks, and said: "Fair sir, I have no hurt that pain-eth me sufficiently to intermit my journey; no man hath power to keep me; I will stay no longer, but part at morn, when I see the day rise." The king shook his head and cried: "'T is pity that you tarry not; I am sure you suffer; if you perish in this forest, 't will be pain and loss. Fair sweet friend, stay until your strength is restored." Erec answered: "Enough; on such conditions have I made my vow, that I will not delay for any cause." When the king perceived that prayers were useless, he let words be, and bade the tables be brought and supper served. The servants went about it; 't was a Friday night, when they

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partook of luce and perch, salmon and trout, and afterwards of pears, fresh and baked. After the meal, with little delay, they bade the beds be made. The king, who loved Erec, caused him to sleep by himself that his wounds might not be disturbed; not far away, beneath a coverlet of ermine, lay Enidè and the queen; they slept a deep sleep until morn broke.

¶ On the morrow, when it dawned, Erec rose and made ready, bidding his arms be brought, and his horses saddled. The king and his knights continued to entreat, but prayers were of no avail. He took arms, and Enidè arrayed herself, while the court lamented, for they never hoped to see their faces again. Knights emptied their tents, and called for their steeds, but Erec thanked them, and bade them take no trouble, for companions he would not have. His horse and lance were brought, and the knights commended one another to God. Enidè mounted, and they pursued their journey.

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The Two Giants

THEY entered a great forest, through which they rode until the hour of prime. Afar off, they heard cries like the shrieks of a maid in distress. Erec called Enidè: "Lady, through this wilderness roveth a maiden, who shrieketh wildly; I would fain inquire what need she hath; do you alight, and await me here." "Sir, willingly." He left her, and sped through the wood, until he found the damsel, who roved wringing her hands, tearing her hair, and wounding her tender cheeks till they were crimsoned with blood. Erec wondered, and demanded why she grieved so bitterly. She cried, sighing, "Fair sir, no marvel if I weep; I love not my life, since two wicked giants, his mortal foes, have carried away my lover, whom they will put to a cruel death. Alas, what shall I do, who have lost the best of knights, the most gentle and debonair! Frank knight, for God's pity, I entreat thee, succor my friend! Thou hast not far to journey, they are near at hand." "Damsel, since you beseech me, I will follow, and do my best; I will bring him, or share his prison, if they spare him till I arrive." "Gentle knight, I will serve you all my life, if you restore my friend! Be commended to God.

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Go, your mercy!" "Which way did they go?" "Sir, yonder; behold the tracks." With that, Erec galloped, bidding the maid wait, while she sweetly besought God that He would cause to be discomfited the enemies of her friend.

℄ Erec made haste, and before they had issued from the wood came in sight of the giants, who were leading the knight mounted on a draught-horse, unshod and naked, and bound hand and foot, as if he had been caught stealing. They carried neither swords nor spears, but iron maces, and scourges, wherewith they beat their prisoner so cruelly, that the flesh was cut to the bone, and the blood flowed to the belly of the horse. Between two thickets, he overtook them and demanded: "Sirs, what crime hath this man committed, to be bound like a thief? 'T is shameful, to strip a knight, and bind him, and beat him! Give him to me, for love and not for force." "Vassal," they cried, "what affair is it of yours? You are silly, to ask us! If it grieveth you, mend it!" "Indeed it doth grieve me, and without controversy you shall not take him! Since you give me leave, let the man keep him who gets him; beware, I defy you!" "Vassal, you are mad! If there were four of you, you would be as helpless as a lamb between two

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wolves." "I know not; if the sky falls, we shall catch larks; self praise goes little ways; have a care, I am after you!" The giants grasped their huge maces; Erec rode, lance in rest, and smote the first through the eye, into the brain, so that blood streamed behind the neck; he fell, and his heart failed. When the other saw, he was troubled, and no wonder; with both hands he swung his mace, and aimed at Erec's bare head; Erec caught it on his shield, but the force was so great that the blow stunned him, and well-nigh beat him to earth; the giant recovered, and aimed a second stroke; but Erec, with drawn sword, made an assault, and smote the giant on the head, in such manner that he made two halves of him, cleaving him to the saddle-bow; meantime, the knight wept for joy, and adored God, who had sent him succor.

℄ Erec unbound and drest the knight, and set him on one of the steeds; the other he gave him to lead, and inquired his estate. The knight returned: "Frank cavalier, I take thee for my lord, for 't is thou who hast saved my life, which would else have been taken, with great torments. Fair sweet sir, what fortune hath sent thee? I will do thee homage, and attend thee all my days." Erec returned: "Friend, I desire not thy service; know that

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I came for thy friend's sake, whom woful I found in this wild; to her it is that I wish to present you. When I have brought you together, alone will I go my way, for your company I seek not; yet fain would I learn your name." "Cadoc of Tabriol, so am I called; tell me who you are, and of what country, and where I may find you, after I depart hence." "Friend, that I will not say; speak of it no more; yet if you desire to know it, and do me honor, without delay make haste to the court of my lord King Arthur, who hunteth the stag in this forest, scarce five short leagues; declare to him, that you come from the man whom to-day he entertained in his camp. There you may inquire who I am, otherwise you shall not learn." "Sir, I will go, doubt it not; the truth of the battle, as it was fought for my sake, I will recite to the king."

¶ So conversing, they proceeded until they arrived at the place where the damsel had remained. Great was her joy when she beheld her friend, on whom she had never hoped to set eyes. Erec took him by the hand, and said: "Maiden, be not sad; here is your knight, safe and happy." She answered discreetly: "Sir, you have conquered us both; such service who can guerdon?" Erec returned: "My sweet friend, I ask no recom-

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pense. I commend you to God; I have tarried too long." With that, he turned the head of his horse, and sped swiftly as he might, while Cadoc and his damsel repaired to court, and carried news to King Arthur and the queen.

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Limors

FAST as he might, Erec galloped to the place where Enidè waited; when she saw him, she was overjoyed, but comprehended not the distress he was in, for his body was bathed in blood, and his heart began to fail. In descending a slope, he fell forward on the neck of his charger; as he strove to rise, he lost his stirrups and lay lifeless. When Enidè beheld, great was her grief; she shrieked, and wrung her hands, rending her robe until her bosom was bare, and tearing her tender face. She swooned on the body, and when she revived, fell to reproaches: "Alas, poor Enidè, I am the murderer of my lord! 'T is my tongue hath slain him; he would still be alive, had not I, insolent fool, driven him to depart! Silence never harmed man, but speech would have ruined him, many a time and oft; 't is I who have proved the saying true."

¶ She seated herself before her lord, and took his head on her knees: "Alas for thee, knight without peer, in whom was Beauty mirrored, and Prowess proven! Wisdom gave thee her heart, and Generosity set on thee her crown! Woe 's me, what have I said? O'ergreat hath been my crime, to utter the words, the fatal

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words, that cost the life of my lord; I know and confess, that save myself, none is in fault." She sank once more, and after she had risen, cried more desperately: "God, what shall I do? Death, whom I await, why not accept me now? Nay, he holdeth me in scorn; since Death rejecteth me, 't is mine own hand must inflict the penalty; so shall I die, spite cruel Death, who refuseth his aid. Wishes will not suffice, nor lamentation avail; the sword my lord wore must avenge his fate."

¶ The weapon she drew, and paused to behold it; God, who is full of pity, withheld her hand; while she recorded her woe, with horsemen arrived a count, who from afar had heard her cries: his people took away the brand, and restored it to the scabbard; after that, the count dismounted, and inquired of the slain knight if she were his wife or his friend. "Both, sir," she cried; "too deep is my grief to tell more; 't is my sorrow that yet I live." "Lady, in God's name, have mercy on yourself! You have reason to mourn, but be not dismayed; in time, God will give you joy. Your beauty so fine destineth you to happy fate; I will take you to wife, and make you my lady and countess; this should be your consolation. The body will I raise, and honorably commit to earth; give over, for you

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demean yourself wildly." She replied: "Sir, begone! For God's pity, spare me! Here you have nothing to gain; naught you can do or say will ever bring me mirth."

¶ The count retired, and said to his men: "Let us make a bier, whereon to lay this corpse, and bear it, with the dame, to my castle of Limors, where it shall be interred; after that I will wed the lady, averse though she be, for never was such beauty; I rejoice to have found her; come, let us make haste." His men drew their swords, cut poles, and crossed staves; on the litter they laid Erec, and harnessed two horses; beside rode Enidè, who did not intermit her grief; many a time she swooned, and would have fallen, had not the knights sustained her with words of comfort. To Limors they bore the dead, and ascended to the palace, followed by a crowd of knights, dames, and burgesses. In the hall, on a dais, they laid out the body, lance and shield beside. The palace filled, and the throng increased, while every man inquired of his neighbor, for whose sake the mourning was made.

¶ The count took privy counsel with his barons: "Sirs, I wish to take this dame; 't is easy to see that she is wise, and gently born; her beauty and frankness would honor an

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emperor; I mean not to worsen her, but better her; let my chaplain be called, and do you bring the lady; I will give her the half of my land, if she will perform my pleasure." With that, as their lord had bidden, they summoned the chaplain, and perforce gave away the lady, in spite of her gainsaying. When the marriage had been made, the constable caused the tables to be brought in, and supper served.

¶ After vespers, Enidè was in despair, and would not cease her lament. With prayers and threats the count urged her to make peace; lief or loath, he had her throned, and set a table in front, while he placed himself opposite. "Lady," he exclaimed, "you must give over this sorrow; trust me for honor and wealth. Remember how poor I found you, and how rich I have made you. Fortune hath been liberal, in that she hath granted you the title of a countess. True, slain is your lord; think you I wonder, if you mourn? Not so; but I counsel you the best I can. Since I have wedded you, you ought to be cheered. Have a care, how you vex me! Eat, I command you." She answered: "Sir, so long as I live, I will never touch food or drink, until eateth my lord, who lieth on yon dais." "Lady, that can never be! You will pass for mad, to

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talk so wildly; you will deserve ill of me, if you force me to urge you again."

℄ Enidè was silent, for she recked not of his threats; and the count smote her in the face. She screamed, while his barons blamed him. "Stop, sir!" they cried: "ashamed should you be, to beat this lady because she refuseth to eat. If she is ill at ease for the sake of her dead lord, none can say that she doth wrong." "Hush, all of you! she is mine, and I hers; I will work on her my will." On that, Enidè could not keep her peace, but vowed that his she would never be. The count raised his hand, and struck her a second time; then she shrieked aloud: "Ha, cruel man, I care not for thy threats and blows! Strike me, beat me! I will do for thee neither less nor more, shouldst thou tear out mine eyes, or flay me alive!"

℄ Meantime, Erec came to himself, as one who waketh out of sleep. He was amazed at the folk about, and no wonder; great was his wrath, when he heard the cry of his wife. He stept down from the dais, and drew his sword; anger gave him strength, and the love his wife bore him; without a word, he smote the count on the forehead, with such force that blood and brains flew. The knights leapt up from the tables, for they thought it was a demon,

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who had come into the hall. Young and old, they emptied the palace, shouting: "Fly, fly! the dead cometh!" At the portal, great was the throng, while every man pushed his neighbor, and the last would fain be first. Erec ran to his shield, and hung it about his neck, while Enidè grasped the lance; in this manner, they came to the middle of the court. None dared stop them, for they thought it was no man, but a fiend who had entered the body. They fled, and Erec pursued, until, in the public place, he found a lad watering his charger, saddled and bridled. He ran to the head of his horse, and the boy let go, for he was greatly frightened; Erec mounted between the horns of the saddle, and after that, by his bidding, Enidè grasped the stirrup, and leapt on the neck of the charger. They found the gate wide, and passed without arrest; his people mourned the count, but none dared to issue in order to avenge him. As he bore away his wife, Erec clasped and kissed her; with both arms he pressed her to his heart, and cried: "My sweet sister, I have proven you in every manner! Be not dismayed, for I care for you more than ever, and sure I am that you love me with a perfect love! From this time forth, I wish to be wholly at your command, as in days before; and if you have

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said of me aught that is hard, I forgive and acquit you for the offence and the speech." Now was Enidè at her ease, when her lord caressed her, and assured her of his love. That night they rode fast, and by good fortune the moon shone clear.

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Guivret's Expedition

RUMOR sped, for naught is so fleet; to Guivret, the little count, came tidings, how in the forest had been found a slain knight, with a lady so fair, that Iseut the blonde was not fit to be her handmaid; they had been discovered by Count Oringle of Limors, who had borne off the body, and wished to marry the dame against her will. When Guivret heard, he was troubled, for he bethought himself of Erec; it came into his mind that he would go seek the lady, and inter the corpse with great honor. Knights and servants, he levied a thousand men, to take the castle, and put all to fire and flame, unless they should be surrendered. By the bright moonbeams, he marched toward Limors, helms laced, hauberks donned, and shields suspended from necks.

¶ Near midnight, Erec espied them, and thought he could not shun prison or death. "Lady," he said, "alight, and conceal yourself here, behind this hedge, until yonder troop hath passed; I would not have you be seen, for I know not who they are, or what they seek; I trust they will not mind us; if they mean ill, we have no refuge. I know not what will arrive, but for fear I will not avoid them;

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if any man attack me, I shall not shun him, although I suffer; I will proceed, and do you remain quiet; take heed that none observe you, till they are gone."

¶ Guivret rode with levelled lance, for he had perceived them from afar; they failed to recognize one another, for a dark cloud had come over the moon. Erec drew out of the hedge, and they jousted, without a word; but it was no equal match, for one was weak and the other strong; Guivret smote Erec with such force that he hurled him over the croup of his horse. When Enidè saw, in consternation she ran to his aid, and caught Guivret by the rein: "Knight, cursed art thou, who hast assailed a man hurt near to death, thou knowest not why! Hadst thou been alone, it had been shameful! For thy frankness, let be; thine honor would not be furthered, to take or slay a knight who cannot rise; he hath done battle until he is covered with wounds!" Guivret replied: "Lady, chide not! I see that you are loyal, and I honor you; entertain no fear of me, or my mates. Yet tell me, hide it not, by what name is he called? whoever he is, he shall go safe and free."

¶ She answered briefly: "His name is Erec. I tell truth, for I see you are debonair." With joy, Guivret alighted, and threw himself at

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Erec's feet: "Sir, I was on my way to Limors, when I looked to find you dead, for I heard that thither had Count Oringle borne a knight, hurt to death, and was fain to wed the lady, whom he had found, though she cared not for him; I was on my way to succor her; if he had not given up the dame and yourself, I should have despised myself, had I left him a foot of land. Be sure I should not have interfered, unless I loved you; I am your friend, Guivret; if I have vexed you, because I knew you not, you ought to pardon me." On these words, Erec sat up, for he could do no more, and exclaimed: "Friend, be acquitted of fault, seeing you did it unwittingly." Guivret rose, and Erec recounted the tale, how he had slain the count at his own table, and recovered his charger from the stable where it was kept, while knights ran through the place, shouting: "Fly, the dead comes!"

℣ Guivret said: "Sir, near at hand have I a hold, of situation fair and healthy; for your ease and honor, on the morn thither would I have you repair, that our wounds may be dressed. Two sisters I have, gentle and gay, who are skilled in healing hurts. To-night will we encamp in these fields, for methinks repose shall benefit you greatly." Erec consented, and they lodged themselves, as well as

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they might; Guivret caused his pavilion to be pitched, and made his men burn an ash-tree; from the packs were brought candles, to light the tent. Enidè was cheerful, for now fair was her fortune; her lord she disarmed, cleansing the wounds and binding them, for she was not willing that any hand should touch them, other than her own. Erec could not reproach her, seeing that he had tried her so long, and loved her so dearly. With embroidered cushions, Guivret made a bed, high and wide, on which was spread store of grass and reeds; there Erec was couched, while his host opened a coffer, and brought forth two pasties. "Friend," he said, "eat a little, and my lady your wife, who hath suffered for your sake; now you may make amends, for you have come off safely; partake, and I will join you." With that, he took his seat beside them; Erec they urged to taste, and gave him wine mingled with water, for the pure liquor would have been too potent; he ate like a sick man, and drank as much as he dared; he slept soundly, all night long, for not a sound was to be heard.

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AT morn they were waked, and prepared to mount; Erec, who loved his horse, would ride no other; for Enidè, who had lost her palfrey, they brought out a mule that ambled gently, and bore her with ease. It comforted her, that Erec was in no dismay, and declared his recovery would be perfect. By the third hour, they came to Penevric, a castle of fair situation, where were sojourning the sisters of Guivret, for the place was pleasant. In a delectable chamber apart from folk, his host lodged Erec, and besought his sisters that they would use all pains to heal him. Erec confided in them, for they made him many assurances; they removed the dead flesh, and spread ointment, often bathing the hurts and renewing the bandages. Every day, four times or more, they gave him to eat and drink, keeping him from salt and spices; whoever went out or in, Enidè, whom most he desired, was always at his side. Frequently came Guivret, to ask what he would have, while the maidens took such pains, that in a fortnight's time he felt no pain or ache. Afterwards they began to bathe him, in order to bring back his color; if he needed anything, a hint was sufficient.

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¶ When he was able to come and go, Guivret caused to be made two robes, one of ermine and the other of vair; the linings were of different stuffs, one blue and the other rayed, which a cousin of Scotland had sent as a gift. Enidè received the blue and ermine, and Erec the rayed and vair. Thus he grew strong, and Enidè content; her looks returned, for pale had she grown in her season of tribulation. She was kissed and embraced, and eased with all kindness; each caressed and endeared the other, naught made them such delight; great had been the pain they had brooked, he for her sake, and she for his, so that their penance had completely been performed. They vied in pleasing one another; they confirmed their love and forgot their affliction until they could hardly recollect that ever they had been miserable.

¶ It was time to be gone; they took leave of their host, whom they had found so faithful. At parting, Erec said: "Sir, I must not delay my return; do you provide me with all that is necessary. To-morrow, when dawns the day, I wish to go; I have tarried, until I feel myself sound and well. May God, if He please, enable me to live until I meet you where it shall be in my power to honor and serve you. Save I be taken or kept, I mean

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not to linger, until I arrive at the court of King Arthur, whom I look to find in Rohais or Carlisle." Guivret responded: "Sir, alone you shall not go; I will attend you, with comrades, if it pleaseth you." Erec agreed; that night their preparations were made, and every man prepared his equipment.

¶ At morn, when they were waked, Erec ran to the chamber of the maids, to take his leave, and with him Enidè, rejoiced that the time had come. They bade adieu; Erec, who was courteous, thanked them for life and health, and made proffers of service. By the hand he took the one who was nearest, and Enidè her sister; from the room they issued, and went to the palace; Enidè thought the time would never come when they should be in the saddle. For her sake, to the horse-block was led a palfrey, as precious as that which she left at Limors. The latter had been vair, and this was chestnut, but the head of other hue, half black and half white, while between ran a line, green as a mulberry leaf, that parted the colors. Poitral and lorain were crusted with gold and emeralds, but the saddle, which was covered with a precious purple, of other device; on the ivory horns was carven the story, how Æneas came from Troy, how in Carthage with great joy Dido received

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him, how Æneas deceived her, and she slew herself for his sake, and how, after that, he had conquered Laurentium, and all Lombardy, over which he had reigned his life long. Subtle was the work, relieved with fine gold; the Briton who had wrought it had spent seven years without setting hand to other task; 't is unknown what he gained, but the price must have been great. It was brought to Enidè, caparisoned as it was, and with pleasure she mounted; after her, the rest took horse. Many

a golden goshawk, tercel, and falcon, many
a brach and leveret, caused Guivret
to be carried, for sport
on the road.

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Coronation

IN nine days, they arrived at Rohais, where they had learned that King Arthur was to be found. On the day before, the king had been cupped in his chamber, in private fashion, for with him were only five hundred barons of his house; never before had he been left so deserted; it grieved him, that his retinue was petty. A messenger found the king, and saluted him discreetly: "Sir, I am sent by Erec, and Guivret the Little;" with that he related how they were on the road. The king responded: "Welcome shall they be, as barons valiant and brave; I know not where better may be found, to amend my court." He bade the queen be called, and told her the news; his knights saddled their steeds, and omitted the spurs, so great was their haste.

¶ Already had arrived the petty folk, scullions, cooks, and butlers, to prepare the hostels; the main troop followed hard after, and by this time had entered the city; the knights of Arthur encountered and saluted them, with many kisses. Erec and his companions went to their inn, where they eased themselves, stripping their hose and donning rich robes; when they were arrayed, they turned toward

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the palace. To court they came; the king saw them, and the queen, who was wild to set eyes on Erec. King Arthur seated Erec at his side, kissing him, and Guivret after; Enidè he clasped in both arms, embraced her and made much of her, and the queen did the like, so taken up with the guests that she thought of nothing beside. Every man did his best to make them welcome; after that, the king commanded peace, and besought Erec to recount his adventures. When hushed was the murmur, Erec began his tale, of the three knights, and the five, the count who threatened him, the two giants, and all in order, down to the time when he had slain Count Oringle of Limors. "Fair sweet friend," cried the king, "you have escaped many a peril; I beseech you, tarry in my court." "Aye, sire, if you will, three whole years; beg Guivret also to stay, and I will join in the request." King Arthur asked, and Guivret consented.

¶ In this manner they abode at court, retained and honored by the king, until the death of Erec's father, who was aged and full of years. To Tintagel came envoys, ten of the noblest barons, who found him twenty days before Christmas, and told how his sire, the aged king, had died and passed. Erec grieved, more than he let appear, for unbecoming is the sor-

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row of a king, nor is it proper for such to mourn. At Tintagel he offered vows, and performed them, to houses of God and churches; indigent souls he chose, a hundred sixty and nine, and drest them in new apparel; poor clerks and priests he presented with black capes and warm pelisses, and among all who were in necessity disposed of pence, a bushel and more. After that, he did wisely, in that he declared himself a tenant of King Arthur, and besought leave to be crowned in his court. The king said: "We must go hence to Nantès in Brittany, where shall you receive the insignia of a king, crown on head and sceptre in hand; I bestow on you this honor and bounty." Erec returned thanks, and said the gift was fair.

℄ At Christmas, the king convened his barons, and not one failed to appear at the time appointed. Erec remanded some, and summoned others; of his folk more came than he had called, to do him honor and service. Unforgotten was the father of Enidè, who was first to be sent for, and came like a baron and chatelain, attended not by chaplains or wasted folk, but by noble knights in fair attire. Daily they journeyed, till on the eve of Christmas they entered Nantès the city; they made no pause, until they had reached the great hall,

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where were gathered the king and his court. When Erec and Enidè perceived them, you may guess they were glad; they saluted and embraced, making what gladness they might; hand in hand, the four went into the presence of the king, saluting first himself, and next the queen at his side. Holding his host by the hand, Erec exclaimed: "Sire, behold my good host, my kind friend, who honored me so greatly, that ere he knew who I was, he made me lord of his house; all he had, he rendered, and bestowed his daughter, asking counsel of none." "And the dame, whom he bringeth," cried the king, "friend, who is she?" "Sire, of this lady, know that she is mother of my wife." "Certes, then may I affirm that fair should be the flower that riseth from such a stem, and fairer the fruit, when harvest-time cometh; beautiful is Enidè, and to beauty hath she right, seeing that her mother is a fair lady, and her father a fair knight. She deceiveth them not, but in many a trait copieth and reproduceth one and the other." With that, the king held his peace, and bade them sit; they obeyed, and took their places. Rejoiced was Enidè, when she beheld her father and mother, whom she had missed so long; she showed her delight, all she could, but whatever semblance she made, she felt more.

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¶ After the court had convened, present were counts, dukes, and kings, of many a different country, Normans and Bretons, Scots and Irish, barons of England and Cornwall; from Wales to Anjou, no noble knight or gentle dame, but the best were present at Nantès, according to the summons of the king. Before nones, King Arthur had dubbed four hundred knights, sons of counts and kings; to each he gave three steeds and two robes, to honor his court; the mantles were not of serge or coney-skins, but samite and ermine, vair and diaper, brocades heavy and stiff. Alexander, who subdued the world, was niggard in comparison; Cæsar, emperor of Rome, and all kings famous in song and story, never bestowed so much at a single feast. Mantles were thrown broadcast, for any to take; on a carpet were flung thirty measures of white shillings, money that from the days of Merlin had been current in Britain. On the third hour, at Christmas, the court convened; tongue of man could not recite the third part of the joy made at that coronation.

¶ The king possessed two thrones, of gold and ivory, subtly carved, so alike that they could not be told apart; of the legs, two were a leopard's, and two those of a cockatrice; a knight, Briant of the Isles, had presented them

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to King Arthur and his queen. The king took his seat on one, and on the other placed Erec, who was clad in a robe of moire. In history we read the description of the robe; four fairies had fashioned it, with surpassing skill and mastery. The first fairy had portrayed Geometry, as she measureth the heavens and the earth, their depth and height, width and length; then she examineth, how deep the sea is and wide, and meteth the whole world. Such labor had wrought the first; and the second gave her pains to depict Arithmetic, who numbereth the days and the hours, the sands of the sea, and the stars parcel by parcel, and the leaves of the forest, yet never erreth, when she wisheth to know. The third had busied herself with Music, for whom every joy accordeth, chant and descant, tone of lute, harp, and viol; at her feet lay all instruments of delight. The fourth fairy, last to finish, had set forth the noblest of the arts, Astronomy, she who is so marvellous, that she taketh counsel of stars and moon and sun; whatsoever she inquireth, they inform her, without falsehood and deceit. Such was the adornment of the robe, woven in tissue of gold; its lining counterfeited beasts, heads white and necks black, bodies vermeil, and tails blue; in Inde are such born, and on spices

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they feed. Rich was the mantle, tasselled with four stones, two chrysolites and two amethysts, set in gold.

¶ At this hour, Enidè had not yet entered the hall; when the king saw that she was late, he bade Gawain bring her, and the queen; Gawain went, attended by King Cadwallon, and the generous king of Galloway, by Guivret, and Ider son of Nut. Barons ran after to escort the queen, a thousand in number, the ruin of a host. The queen had done her best to array Enidè; to the palace they led her, on one hand Gawain and on the other the king of Galloway, who loved her for the sake of Erec his nephew. King Arthur went to meet her, and with frankness seated Enidè beside Erec; from his treasure he bade be fetched two crowns, of massy gold, lustrous with carbuncles, four on each; the splendor of the moon is naught to that which the smallest shed. The folk were dazzled, so that it was long ere they recovered the clearness of their vision; the king himself was amazed, yet rejoiced, regarding their brightness and beauty. Two maids he bade hold one, and two barons the other; bishops and priors he commanded to advance, and anoint Erec, according to the law of Christ. The bishop of Nantès, a good man and holy, consecrated the new king, and

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set the crown on his head. King Arthur called for a sceptre, of great fame; 't was glass-clear, of a single emerald, the size of the hand; no manner of beast, or fish, or flying creature, but was thereon figured, each in its proper form. The sceptre was given to the king, who eyed it wonderingly; forthwith, he put it in Erec's hand, who now was king by right; after him, Enidè was crowned. Bells rang for mass, and they repaired to the main church, while the father and mother of Enidè wept for delight. As they approached, from the monastery issued a procession, bearing relics and treasures, crosses, texts, and censers, and pixes with bodies of the saints, carried with chanting. Never at one mass had been seen so many kings, counts, and dukes; the cathedral was full, though no churl might enter, but ladies and knights alone. After mass had been heard, they returned to the palace, where tables were set, and cloths spread; in five halls were five hundred tables, set so close that it was scarce possible to see between; at each sat a king or count, with a hundred knights. Clad in pelisses of fresh ermine, a thousand knights served the bread, a thousand the wine, and a thousand the meats; in plenty, all were helped according to their desire.

¶ After the banquet, the king dismissed the

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assembly, kings and counts and dukes, so many in number, and petty folk who attended the feast; liberally he bestowed horses, arms, and silver, cloths and stuffs of many fashions, by reason of his own frankness, and for the honor of Erec, whom he dearly loved.

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Alexander and Soredamor

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Journey to Britain

TO Alexander, emperor of Greece, by his wife Tantalis, were born two sons, Alexander and Alexius; so different were their ages, that when the younger came into the world, the elder was already fit to become a knight and maintain the empire. Out of his high spirit, Alexander disdained to be knighted in his own country; because he had heard of King Arthur, and of the noble company who made his court famous throughout the world, he was determined to visit Britain, and seek knighthood from its king. He went to his father, and said: "Fair father, for honor's sake, I crave a boon; deny me not, if it ought to be bestowed." The emperor, who was more anxious for the honor of his son than aught beside, responded: "Fair son, your request shall be granted; tell me, what is it you desire?" "Gold and silver, and comrades of my choosing, that I may go abroad, and offer my service to the king who judgeth Britain, in order that he bestow on me chivalry; so long as I live, I will never bear arms, unless it be King Arthur who girdeth my sword." "Fair son, say not so! Your own shall be this realm, and Constantinople the rich city; in time you shall be crowned, and to-morrow

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I will make you a knight; you shall receive your barons, and accept the oaths and fealty, which they are bound to render; such gift it would be folly to refuse." The varlet returned: "Give me vair and gray, a good steed and silken attire; before I am knighted, I wish to serve King Arthur, for I am not yet fit to bear arms; neither entreaties nor smooth words shall prevent me from faring to the foreign land, to behold the king and his barons; neglect causeth many a brave man to lose the praise which he might earn if he roamed the world; repose and renown consort not together, and the idlesse of the coward is the burden of the brave; the man is a slave to his having, who spendeth his days in getting. Fair father, if I deserve, I wish to toil for renown."

℄ The emperor was glad and sorry, pleased with the ambition of his son, and loath to lose him; glad or grieved, he must keep his promise, for an emperor may not lie. "Fair son," he cried, "since honor you seek, I must do your pleasure; of my wealth receive two boatloads of silver and gold, wherewith to be liberal. Fair son, Generosity is the queen that illumineth all other virtues, without whom availeth neither courtesy nor wisdom, strength, chivalry, nor beauty. As the newborn rose out-

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shineth any flower, so Generosity surpasseth other excellencies, and multiplieth a hundred fold the worth she findeth." In this manner, the varlet had his desire; it troubled his mother, but grieve who might, Alexander would tarry no longer; the same evening, his ships were freighted with bread, meat, and wine.

¶ On the morrow, Alexander and his mates went down to the sand, attended by the emperor and empress; beside the cliff they found their ships manned; the sea was calm and the air still. After the youth had taken leave of his father and mother, he entered the vessel, followed by his mates; the sail was hoisted and the anchor raised. The company on the shore followed them with their eyes, and ascended a high hill to keep them in view as long as they could; with tears they commended them to God, praying that He would bring them to port, without loss or disaster. All April and part of May they were at sea, and ran no great risk, but came to harbor below Hampton, between nones and vespers; they were pale and weak, but full of joy, because they had escaped from the sea. That night they remained in Hampton, and inquired, if the king were in England; they were told that he was at Winchester, and they might soon arrive, if they took the straight

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road, for it was not far. The tidings pleased them; on the morrow they rose early, and arrayed themselves; after they were attired, they went straight to Winchester, where they had learned that the king was to be found. Before the hour of prime, the Greeks arrived at the palace; they dismounted at the stair, leaving their horses and squires, and ascended to the best king who ever was born. When they came into his presence, they doffed their mantles, and entered bareheaded; beside their master, they were twelve in number, drest in garments of one fashion; none was fairer than Alexander himself. He knelt before the king, and his mates did the like.

℄ "King," he cried, "Fame saith, and she speaketh truly, that since God made man, no king that believed in Him was ever so mighty. The renown that runneth hath brought me to your court, to obey and honor you, that if my service please, by your hand may I be made a knight; for otherwise never will I be called by that name. King debonair, retain myself, and these my companions." The king returned, "Friend, I refuse not thee nor thy company; welcome, for I take you to be sons of worthy men. Tell me, whence come you?" "Sir, from Greece." "Greece?" "Even so." "Who is thy father?" "Sir, the emperor."

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"What name hast thou, fair friend?" "Alexander was the name put on me, when I received salt and chrism and baptism." "Alexander, fair sweet friend, I retain you gladly, for great honor have you done me, in coming to my court; I esteem you as a vassal frank and wise; you have knelt too long; rise, I command you, and from this hour be of my court and privacy; in happy time have you arrived."

¶ The Greeks rose with joy; in the court was no baron who did not accost and salute them. They made the acquaintance of Sir Gawain, and of the others, one by one; and Sir Gawain so loved Alexander, that he claimed him for friend and comrade. They took hostel with a burgess, the best they could find; Alexander led a fair life, as his father had exhorted him to do; on every man he bestowed horses of worth, which he had brought from his own country. He took such pains, and served so well, that the king and queen and the barons praised him and loved him.

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First Love

AT this time, King Arthur intended to cross the sea, and visit Brittany; he convened his barons, and asked their counsel, inquiring to whom he should confide Britain, in order that it might be kept safe until his return. All advised that it should be intrusted to Count Angrès of Windsor, for him they took to be the baron most trustworthy in all the realm. On the morrow after the country had been given in charge, King Arthur, with his queen and her maidens, went their way; to Brittany came news of their approach, and the Bretons heard it with great joy.

¶ No youth or maiden entered the king's ship, save only Soredamor, whom the queen had brought, a scornful maid, for she had never heard of any man so worthy that she was willing to bestow on him her love. Yet was she so fair, that love she might have had, if she had been willing to accept it; but she would never allow it to enter her mind. Now Love bethought himself of avenging her pride and disdain; he shot straight, and smote her heart with his arrow, so that she paled and trembled, and loved in her own despite. She could not refrain from gazing on Alexander;

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now she was pleased and now offended, now she desired and now she refused; she accused her eyes of treason, and cried: "Eyes, you have betrayed me, for you have made an enemy of my heart, that erst was so faithful. Now all I see offendeth me; offendeth? nay, pleaseth. If aught disturbeth me, are not mine eyes under my own control? I am a poor creature, if I cannot force my eyes to look another way. He wooeth me not; if he loved me, would he not ask me? Shall I love one who careth not for me? If his beauty charmeth my eyes, shall I say, I love him? Nay, it would be a lie. Is it mine eyes that are to blame? No, but the heart, for eyes will not look, unless heart please. I can do little, if I cannot govern myself. Shall I be guided by Love, who misleadeth others? Let him control them, for I will have nothing to do with him, and will never make his acquaintance." So she chid herself, now loved, and now hated, and knew not which part to take; while Alexander, on his part, set his mind on herself. It would have been a true love, had either known what the other felt; but he could not guess her heart, nor she understand his trouble. The queen saw them change color and sigh, but laid the blame on the sea, till the vessel came to port, where the

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Bretons were rejoiced, and served the king as their rightful lord.

¶ The queen, and the ladies of her chamber, did their best to recommend themselves to Alexander; but she, on whom he oftenest thought, dared not accost him. 'T is the way of lovers, to feed their eyes with looks, when they can get no more; and therewith increaseth their love, so that what they take for their aid becometh their hurt. Thus grew the affection of this pair; but each kept it a secret, so that it resembled the fire beneath the ashes, which burneth the hotter. Both did their best to feign, that it might not be observed.

¶ That night, Love presented to Alexander the image of the lady who had stolen his heart, and would not suffer him to rest; he took delight in presenting to himself the face, from which he never hoped to receive blessing. "I may count myself a fool, since I dare not utter what would work me woe. I have set my heart on a silly thing; shall I conceal it, and seek no counsel? Foolish is the man, who hath a sickness, and doth not ask advice. Yet why seek the aid he hopeth not to get? I know my pain so severe, that by medicine it cannot be eased. I might have been helped, durst I have addressed the physician who could heal me; but methinks, he is hard to

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persuade; he would not have deigned to accept my fee. 'T is no wonder, if I am dismayed; for I know not the source of my sickness. No? yes, I think, 't is Love causeth it. How, can Love do evil? Is he not sweet? I thought, in him had been nothing but goodness, yet I have found him cruel. None who hath not tried, knoweth Love's game; silly is his servant, for daily 't is his pleasure to torture his subjects. What shall I do then, renounce him? I would, but cannot. If Love chasteneth me, to instruct me, ought I to disdain my master? What he teacheth me, I ought to heed, for good may come of it. But his punishments are too severe. How, no hurt showeth, and thou frettest? Art thou not wrong? No, for he hath wounded me to the heart, with the bolt he hath not plucked out. How, if no injury is apparent? Through the eye. Yet the eye acheth not, 't is the heart that acheth; tell me, how hath the arrow traversed the eye, and left it whole? Why is it the heart, not the sight, that grieveth? I can tell; the eye hath no power of its own; 't is the mirror, whereby passeth the flame, that enkindleth the heart. The heart in the bosom is like the candle in the lantern; while it burneth, the lantern is not dark, and the fire which shineth in its centre injureth it not. 'T is the same

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with glass; the sun's ray passeth through, and divideth it not, nor would the glass be bright, were it not for the beam, whose clearness is apparent by means of its own. So with the eyes whereon shineth the ray, which the heart beholdeth as if in a mirror, so that it must be careful, lest it be betrayed. Thus hath my vision cheated me, for therein hath been reflected a beam, that hath caused my heart to fail. Where shall I find friends, when my eyes and heart are my foes, servants who perform their own pleasure, regardless of mine? By experience have I learned, that a good master is ruined by the servants he supporteth. Now will I describe the arrow that hath been aimed at me; but 't is so precious that I fear I may fail. 'T is plumed with the golden tresses I lately beheld on the sea; how rich would be the man who might own a treasure so great! And of the remainder, who can describe the worth, such that I long to behold the brow, brighter than ice or emerald? Yet 't is naught to the clear eyes, like two candles aflame; and who can depict the countenance, where the rose covereth the lily, to illumine the face, and the laughing lips? From hair to broach, the bosom showeth whiter than snow; visible is only notch and plume, for the arrow is hidden in its quiver,

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the gown and shift, that clothe the maid. This is the ray, this the dart, I was so churlish as to blame. Let Love work his will on me, as with his subject he hath a right to do; I desire it, and it pleaseth me, and I would not have the sickness depart, but last forever, since of health I have no expectation, unless it arise from the same source whence came the disease."

¶ Thus debated Alexander; while as earnest was the complaint which the damsel made. All night she lay so distressed, that she could not sleep, weeping and tossing as if her heart would fail. After she had sobbed and sighed, she wondered what was the bridle wherewith Love restrained her; and when she had brought herself to peaceful thoughts, she fell back, and cried: "Fool! what is it to me if this youth be debonair and wise and brave? The better for himself; had I the power, I would not minish him. If he were wise as Solomon, and Nature had granted him all fairness that can be enclosed in human form, and if God had given me the means to mar his beauty, I would not quarrel with it, but make him, if I could, wiser and fairer. Then, I do not hate him. Does it follow that I love him? No more him than another. Why then do I think of him, more than of others? I know

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not, I am beside myself; never mused I so deep on any man; I would fain see him daily, and never permit him to leave mine eyes. Is this Love? I think so; I should not remember him so often, if I cared not for him more than for others. I love, granted; shall I yield to my desire? Aye, if it pleaseth Love. For a long time, I was on my guard against him, and would do nothing for his sake; now, seeing that he cannot prosper through kindness, by force hath he tamed my will, and obliged me to be at his mercy. I will learn of him, he shall teach me, what? I know his service, I need not be told, 't is his will, and mine, that I should be good and humble and gentle to all men, for the sake of one. Must I then love all, for one's sake? I must be gracious to all, but Love commandeth me not to be the love of all; he teacheth me nothing but good. 'T is not for naught that I am called Soredamor; by my name I can prove that I ought to love, and be loved. The first portion meaneth the color of gold; 't is significant, for the blondest are the best. The second part remindeth me of Love; so he who addresseth me, refresheth me with Love's hue. Otherwise rendered, it signifieth Love's sister; honor hath Love done me, to entitle me thus; gilding of gold is not so fine as that which illumineth me. Gilt by

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Love I will be, and will not refuse; I love, and will love forever. Whom? The fair question! him whom Love commendeth; no other shall obtain my love. How shall he know, unless I tell him? The man who wisheth a thing must ask for it. Shall I ask him, then? No. Why not? No woman, unless she were mad, ever did such a thing, as to sue a man for love. Unwise should I be, if I did what would earn me disgrace. If I told him, methinks he would despise me; he would often reproach me, because I had asked him first. My love shall not be so base as to make me first to ask, for I should rightly be held cheap. O heavens! How shall he know, unless I tell him? I never had any trouble that caused me so much doubt. I will wait until he perceiveth it, if he doth perceive, and I am sure he will, if he ever had aught to do with Love, or hath been told of Love. Told! How silly! Love is not so gracious as to let any be taught by words, unless he be his familiar. I know it by my own case; I have been to school, and heard many fair speeches; but I was a stranger to him all my life; it hath cost me dear, for now I know of him more than doth the bull of the plough. One thing dismayeth me; I think he never loved; and if he doth not, I have sown in the sea, whence

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seed is not recovered. I have naught to do, but wait and suffer, until by semblance, or covert speech, I can put him in the path. So will I make him sure of my love, if he dareth take it. The sum is, to him I belong, and if he doth not love me, I will love him."

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The Rebellion

AT the end of the summer, when October began, messengers came through Dover, from London and Canterbury, with tidings that troubled the heart of the king. They brought word, that he might stay too long in Brittany, for the count was a rebel, and had thrown himself into London, with his kindred and friends, to hold the city. When the king heard, he summoned his barons, in great anger, and said they were to blame, for by their advice it was that he had put England into the hands of the felon. They confessed that the king spoke truth, and vowed that there should be no city or castle, from which they would not drag the count; they made promises and took oaths, to surrender the king's traitor, or resign his land. The king made proclamation throughout Brittany, that every man should follow, and none remain behind who was able to bear arms.

¶ All Brittany went out; when the fleet assembled, the sea was so covered with ships, that the water could not be seen; they crossed over, and encamped on the coast of Britain. Alexander resolved that he would ask the king to make him a knight, for never could he hope to win glory, unless in that war; with

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his companions, he resorted to the king's tent. When the king, who was sitting in front of the tent, saw the Greeks, he called them into his presence: "Sirs," he said, "tell me, what errand bringeth you?" Alexander responded: "I am come to ask you, as I have a right to sue my lord, on the part of my comrades and myself, to make us knights." King Arthur answered: "Gladly; since you have entreated me, there shall be no delay." With that, he bade be fetched the armor of thirteen knights; each received his own arms and horse, but the equipment of Alexander, had it been valued, would have been worth as much as the outfit of all the rest. They went straight to the shore, and disrobed themselves, for they would not bathe in any water, save only in the sea.

¶ The queen, who loved Alexander, and wished to do him a favor, searched her chests, until she found a shirt of white silk, sewn with threads of silver and gold. Soredamor, who had made it, had worked in a hair of her own head, to try whether they could be told apart, for the hair was as bright as the gold; the queen took the shirt, and sent it to Alexander. The messenger found the youth by the shore, and presented the garment, which pleased him the more, because it came from the queen; had he known the truth, he would not have ex-

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changed it for the whole world, but made of it a shrine, and worshipped it day and night.

¶ The king's army came to London, where folk gathered round him; Count Angrès assembled his men, as many as he could win by gifts and promises; but after the host was gathered, he stole away by night, for he feared to be betrayed, taking what gold, silver, and victual he could find in the town. News came to the king, how the count had fled, carrying so rich a booty that he had impoverished the burgesses; and the king declared, that he would accept no ransom, but hang the traitor, if he could take him. The army moved, and came to Windsor; in those days, as now, the castle was not easy to capture, if any man defended it; for after he had planned his treason, the count had constructed treble walls and ditches, and backed the ramparts with strong timbers, so that they might not be shaken by engines; during June, July, and August, he had been at great expense to make fosses and trenches, drawbridges, palisades and portcullises, and a great tower of hewn stone; the garrison felt so secure, that they never closed a gate for fear of storm. The castle stands above the Thames; the army encamped on the river, and spent the day in taking up quarters and pitching tents;

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the meadow was covered with pavilions of vermeil and green, and the sunshine smote on the hues, so that for a league the stream seemed ablaze.

¶ The knights of the castle came to joust on the meadow, taking only shields and lances, to show that they were not afraid. When Alexander saw, he cried to his comrades, "Sirs, desire seizeth me, with lance and shield to make the acquaintance of yonder men; they hold us cheap, since without armor they have come to joust in our presence. We are knights newly dubbed; our lances have remained whole too long; what were our shields made for, that they are not yet pierced? A shield is a worthless thing, save it be used." Every man responded: "So God save me, 't is not I will fail you." They girt on their swords, and girthed their steeds; after they had hung their shields about their necks, and grasped their many colored spears, they rushed to the ford. When the count's men perceived them, they levelled lances, and rode to meet them; the Greeks did not give ground, but each smote his man, so hard that he cast him from the saddle. When they heard the noise, the king's host seized arms, and rode to the stream; the count's men fled, for they dared not tarry, and the Greeks followed, beheading

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many, without suffering harm. The killed and maimed were left lying on the sand; that morn, the Greeks had made a good beginning, but Alexander did best of all, for with his own hand he had taken four knights.

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Queen Guinevere's Discovery

UT of courtesy, Alexander wished to present the queen with the first fruits of his chivalry, for he did not desire to give up his captives to the king, who would have soon caused them to be hung. The queen received the prisoners, and bade them be cast into prison, as held for treason. The army spoke of it, and said it was gentle of Alexander; on his part, the king was not pleased, and sent word to the queen, that she should deliver his traitors, or he would take them by force; she went to his tent, and they held debate.

¶ The Greeks remained in the queen's pavilion, conversing with her maidens: Alexander was silent, gazing on Soredamor, who leaned her cheek on her hand, as if she were pensive. At last, about his neck she saw the shirt, which she had herself sewn; she stept forward, for now she had a reason for accosting him; but she paused, and said to herself: "How shall I begin? Shall I call him by his name, or say 'friend?' Friend? Not I. By his name then? Ah, 't is so sweet a word, friend, if I dared use it. What prevents me? 'T is my fear, that I speak not the truth. How? Would he speak false, if he called me, sweet friend? Then should I be untrue if I said it of him?

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If so, his be the fault. Is his name so hard that I wish to give him a title? 'T is too long; I should stop before it was half out. If I called him friend, the word would soon be said. I would have worked in my blood, instead of a hair, if I durst have called him fair friend." While she was musing, the queen returned. Alexander went to meet her, asking whether the king had demanded the prisoners, and what would be done with them. "Friend," she replied, "he requireth me to yield them, in order he may justify them; he is very wroth, that I have not done it; I must send them; there is no help."

¶ So passed that day, and on the morrow, the loyal knights gathered in front of the king's tent, to determine what death the traitors ought to die. Some wished them to be flayed or burned, but the king was of opinion that they ought to be drawn with wild horses; he bade them be bound, and dragged around the castle, for the besieged to see. After this, the king called Alexander: "Friend, yesterday I witnessed your valor; I increase your force by five hundred Welsh knights, and a thousand servants; when the war is over, I will cause you to be crowned as king of the best land of Wales, and deliver to you its cities and castles, to hold until you receive the country

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which belongs to your father, and which one day will be yours." Alexander and his mates thanked the king, and the barons allowed that the honor was well deserved.

¶ Commandment was given, to sound grails and trumpets; the knights took arms, men of Wales and Britain, Cornwall and Scotland, for the host had been strengthened from many quarters. Thames had dwindled, for it had not rained all summer long; the season was so dry, that fish died, ships were stranded, and the stream could be forded in the deepest place. The army crossed; some took to the valley, and others mounted the hill; the count's men saw them, and prepared to defend themselves. The king caused the four traitors to be drawn, as he had said; when their fate was seen, the count was grieved and the others dismayed, but they would not surrender, for they saw that the king was incensed, and they knew that if they were taken they would be put to a cruel death.

¶ The assault began, but it was labor lost, though the king's men made a brave attempt, while crossbows and slings were plied, and arrows and round stones fell like rain blent with hail. They toiled all day, these attacking and those defending, until night parted them. The king caused proclamation to be

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made through the host, that whoever took the castle should receive as a present the richest cup of his treasure, weighing fifteen marks of gold; the work was more costly than the metal, but dearest the gems wherewith the cup was covered. If the man were a servant he should have the vessel, and if he were a knight, he should obtain in addition whatever boon he chose to demand, if the thing were to be had.

¶ After the proclamation, Alexander was in the tent of the queen, whither every evening he was accustomed to resort; the two were seated side by side, while opposite sat Soredamor, who took such delight in gazing, that she would not have taken Paradise in exchange. The queen held Alexander by the right hand, and looked at his shirt, wondering to see how the golden threads paled in comparison with the hair; suddenly she remembered that it was Soredamor's, and she laughed. Alexander asked why she smiled; the queen paused, and glanced at the maid, whom she bade advance; the girl obeyed willingly, and knelt before the queen. Alexander was pleased to see her so near, and dared not look her way; his blood quitted his veins, until he was near swooning, while the damsel, on her part, did not venture to raise her eyes from the ground. The queen wondered, to

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see her turn from pale to red; she observed the faces of the two, and by their change of color guessed that love was the reason; for their sakes, she pretended to notice nothing, and said to the maiden: "Damsel, look; tell me, hide it not, where this shirt was sewn, and whether you have wrought into it aught of yours?" The maiden was ashamed, but she related freely, for she wished Alexander to know; after he had heard, he could scarce refrain from bowing down and worshipping the hair. He was vexed by the presence of the queen and her ladies, or he would have touched the garment to his eyes and lips. He was rejoiced to obtain so much, since he hoped for no more; that night, he solaced himself by embracing the shirt; when he saw the hair, he thought himself lord of the world; but before day broke he was forced to turn to other thoughts.

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The Sally

WITHIN the castle, the traitors were anxious; they could hold out a long time, but they knew the king to be so high-spirited, that he would lie before the town all his life, if it were necessary, and even if they should surrender, they could not hope for their lives. They resolved to sally before dawn and take the besiegers unprepared; before they had time to arm would be wrought such havoc, that the slaughter of that night should eternally be remembered. Despair emboldened them, for they saw no escape. Without delay, they equipped themselves and issued by an old postern, where they thought they would be least suspected, in five battles, each of a thousand knights and two thousand servants. The night was dark, but before they came to the tents, the moon rose, as if God, who wished to confound them, had illumined the obscurity, for there is no crime He hateth so much as treason.

¶ The moonlight shone on their shields, and their helmets gleamed, so that the sentinels perceived them and shouted: "Up, knights, up! The traitors are on you!" The king's men made haste to array themselves, and not a man left his place until they were ready and

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mounted; meantime, the others, who were eager for the fray, came on in five divisions, by wood and river, copse, valley, and hollow. They found the way barred, for the king's men defied them, reproaching them with their treason; they rushed, like lions who devour all they seize. At the first onset, many fell; when the traitors could hold out no longer, they were reinforced on four sides, while King Arthur's knights charged them as fast as they could spur, dealing such blows that five hundred were hurt. The Greeks did not spare, and Alexander bore himself bravely; in the thick of the fray, he smote a wretch, whom neither shield nor hauberk saved; next, he offered his service to another, whom he struck so hard, that the inn of the body remained without a guest. After that, he made acquaintance with a third, a noble knight, whose soul departed from the flesh. He slew and stunned many, rushing like a thunderbolt, and the man he met neither targe nor mail protected. His comrades helped, and the king's folk drove the rebels, like waifs and strays. The combat lasted until after dawn, and the rout continued five leagues down stream.

℄ Count Angrès left his banner on the field, and with seven knights stole toward his castle by a secret way. Alexander saw him and

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thought he would overtake them, without telling any man; but before he gained the valley, he was perceived by thirty knights, six Greeks and four and twenty Welsh, who followed at a distance; when he perceived them, he halted, and watched the rebels, to see by which gate they would enter the castle. He bethought himself of a daring deed, and said to his mates: "Sirs, promise that you will do my pleasure, be it foolish or wise." These declared that they would not disappoint him, and he said: "Sirs, let us change our arms, and take the shields and lances of the traitors we have slain; in this guise we will proceed to the castle; they will suppose that we belong to them and leave open the gates; dead or alive, we will render them up, if God will. If any man repent, so long as I live, I will never love him."

℄ The knights consented, and grasped their shields; meantime, the count and his men had ascended the hill, and reached the outwork; when they saw the shields, they suspected no stratagem; the porter opened the gate and admitted them. They advanced in silence, trailing their lances, until they had passed the third wall, where they found the count and his knights, in great numbers; but all were disarmed, save the eight who had returned

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from the field. Alexander and his mates spurred their steeds, fixed themselves in their stirrups, and without challenge attacked the traitors, who were dismayed, and shouted, "Treason, treason!" They plied their swords, till they had slain three of the eight who were armed; but Count Angrès charged, and on his golden shield smote the Greek Macedor, so that he laid him dead on the ground. When Alexander saw, his blood boiled with fury; he struck the count so hard, that his lance flew in pieces. The count was strong, and so brave that no knight would have been better, if he had not been a traitor. He returned Alexander's stroke, with such force that his lance shivered; both stood firm as rocks; but it weakened the count, that he was in the wrong. They fought with swords, and one or the other would have perished, if the combat had lasted longer; but the count saw his people surprised and slain, while the king's men pressed them and called him traitor. When he heard the word, the count took refuge in his tower, with his friends, while Alexander's knights slew all they overtook, so that only seven escaped to the hold.

¶ At the entrance of the tower the count's men halted, for if the passage had been left free, the pursuers would have forced their way

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in. They expected succor from their friends in the town, but it came too late. Nabunal, a wise Greek, advised that twenty men should hold the gate of the castle, while the rest assaulted the tower. Scarcely had the twenty reached the gate when they saw approach a furious throng, made up of crossbow-men and servants armed with divers weapons, partisans, axes, scimetars, darts, and javelins. When these perceived that the gate was shut, they paused, for they knew they could do nothing; then began a wailing of women and infants, graybeards and youths, so loud that if God had thundered in heaven it would not have been heard. The Greeks were glad, for now they knew that the count could not escape. Four mounted the walls to prevent entrance from without, while sixteen returned to help the ten, who had already forced their way into the tower. The count took his stand beside a door-post, and defended himself with an axe, cleaving all he struck, while his friends were ranged behind; Alexander's knights were sad, for they had lost three of their number. When he saw, Alexander grew wild; with a long beam, that lay on the ground, he dealt the count such a blow that the axe fell from his hands; he grew dizzy and would have fallen had he not been supported by the wall. Alex-

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ander sprang on him and mastered him; the rest were easily overcome when they saw their lord overpowered; they were made captive and led away in shame, as they had deserved.

¶ Meantime, the folk without knew nothing of what had passed within the castle. That morning among the slain had been found the shields of the Greeks; when the men of Alexander recognized the arms of their lord, they swooned on his shield and cried that they had lived too long; but the shields deceived them, for one only had perished. They took up the bodies and went to their tents; the whole army lamented, but the sorrow of the Greeks was so great, that the grief of the others was joy in comparison.

¶ When Soredamor heard the lamentation made over her friend, she thought herself born in an unhappy hour; out of anguish she lost color and memory, and grieved the more that she dare not let her misery be observed. If any had taken note by her face they might have guessed her heart, but every man was too much taken up with his own trouble to heed that of another. The river was choked with corpses; sire wept over son, and son over sire; one mourned a cousin, and another a nephew.

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The Queen's Gift

THE knights in the tower considered how they could inform their friends in the field. They bound their captives, who begged them to take their heads; this the Greeks would not do, but declared that they would render them to the king to receive their desert. After they had disarmed them, they made them mount the wall, and showed them to their friends. Alexander addressed the folk without, and swore by God and the saints, that he would kill every man, unless the castle should be surrendered before the king took it. "Go to my lord, and give yourselves up; save only the count, none of you hath merited death. If you put yourselves at my master's mercy, you will lose neither life nor limb; else you have small hope. Go tell him, that Alexander hath sent you; so debonair is my master, that he will abate his anger. Else you must perish, for pity you will get none." This counsel the people accepted, and resorted to King Arthur's tent, where they cast themselves at his feet. The story was reported through the army; the king and his knights took horse, and hastened to the castle, whence Alexander issued, and encountered the king, to whom he related the story. King Arthur made no de-

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lay, but executed his justice; Alexander he praised, while the other knights gave him joy. In this manner the castle was taken; the besiegers were happy, but the joy of the Greeks was greatest of all.

¶ The king presented Alexander with the costly cup, and declared, that he had no treasure, save his queen and crown, which he would not bestow, if it were demanded. Alexander knew that he had only to ask for his friend, and would not be refused; but he preferred to suffer without her rather than to obtain her against her will. The golden cup he took, and out of courtesy bestowed it on Sir Gawain, who accepted it with reluctance. When Soredamor heard the tidings, and knew that Alexander was alive, she was so glad, that she thought never again could she be unhappy; it seemed to her that he stayed too long, and she wondered why he did not come to the queen's tent, as it was his custom to do.

¶ To Alexander the time passed slowly, until he could feed his eyes with a sweet look; had he not been detained, he would already have been in the tent; the delay displeased him, and he came as soon as he might. The queen advanced to meet him; although he had never spoken, she knew what was in his mind, for

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she read it in his face. As he entered, she greeted him, and gave him joy; for his sake she placed him beside Soredamor, where they could hold parley apart from the rest. She was first to accost him, for she was sure the two were lovers, and that Soredamor could have no better friend.

"Alexander," said the queen, "love is worse than hate to torture the heart of its friend; lovers know not what they do when they conceal their wishes from one another. Hard is the task of love; scarce can one complete the edifice who is not bold in laying the foundation. 'T is said, that death itself paineth less. Of love I will teach you, for I know your trouble, therefore do I school you; hide it not; by your faces I perceive that of two hearts have you made one. Aye, conceal it not; 't is unwise in you to hide your thoughts, for by secrecy each slayeth the other, and maketh himself a murderer of Love. I praise you that by passion you seek not your desire; in honorable wedlock I wish to join you together, for so, as seemeth to me, may your affection long endure. I assure you, if you have willing hearts, I will conclude the marriage."

"Lady," returned Alexander, "I make no excuse, but admit all you affirm. Of love I look never to be free, but know that my heart

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will be set on it so long as my life will last. It pleaseth me, your mercy, what you have said. Since you know my mind, I can hide it no longer. Long ago, had I dared, I would have confessed it, for secrecy hath cost me dear; but it may be that this maid hath no wish that I should be hers, and she mine. Nevertheless, if she give herself not to me, I bestow myself on her." At these words the girl quivered, and did not refuse the present; by voice and look she owned her inclination, for trembling she bestowed herself, and declared that she made no exception of will, body, or heart, but that she put herself at the disposal of the queen, and was ready to perform her pleasure. The queen embraced them both. "Alexander," she said laughing, "I bestow on thee the body of thy friend; the heart, I know, will not be wanting. Whomsoever it vex, I give each of you to the other; take thou thine, and thou thine."

¶ At Windsor, by pleasure of Sir Gawain and the king, on that same day the marriage was made. Of wealth and joy no man could name aught that was not to be found at that wedding. Three honors received Alexander; the first was the castle he had captured, the second, what King Arthur had promised when the war should be ended, the best kingdom

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of Wales, of which he was presently declared sovereign; but the third was the best, in that his love was the chancellor of that exchequer whereof he himself was the sovereign lord.

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The Knight of the Lion

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The Fountain

AT Whitsuntide, when King Arthur was holding court in Carlisle, it happened on a morn that the king forgot himself and slumbered in his chamber, while his knights kept the door; to pass the time, Calogrenant related a misadventure of his own. The queen overheard him, and slipt out so quietly that none of the knights perceived her, save only Calogrenant, who rose to receive her. Kay, who loved to rail, said that Calogrenant thought himself the only courteous person in the company, because he alone had observed the lady. Queen Guinevere blamed Kay for reviling his mates, but the latter replied, that he had spoken no harm, and there was no need to interfere; and he asked Calogrenant to go on with his story. The knight returned, that he would relate no more, unless the queen commanded, and he trusted that she would not force him to repeat what it vexed him to reveal. Howbeit, she bade him tell over, from the very beginning.

¶ Calogrenant recited how, seven years before, he had wandered as a knight errant, in quest of adventures, armed with all his arms. In a thick forest he found a straight path, full of

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gloom and overgrown with thorns; it was in Broceliande. On this track he roved all day long, until, toward evening, in the distance he descried the outwork of a castle. That way he hastened, and came to a palisade and deep fosse; on the bridge paced the chatelain, falcon on wrist. Before Calogrenant had finished his salutation, the vavassour held his stirrup, bidding him alight, and blessing the road by which he had come. With that they crossed the bridge and entered the castle-court, where was suspended a table of copper; on this, with a hammer that hung by, the vavassour struck three blows. At the signal, the household descended; some took the charger, while advanced a fair maid, who disarmed the stranger and conducted him to a green close, where she made him such solace that naught on earth would have moved him to depart. After supper, the vavassour said that he knew not when before he had lodged an errant knight; he begged his guest, if it were possible, to return by the same road; and Calogrenant consented, for he thought shame to refuse.

℣ At morn his horse was saddled, as he had requested the evening before; he commended to God the host and his dear daughter, and took leave of all who were in the house. He

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had not gone far, when, in a clearing, he came on wild bulls, who were fighting one with another; he saw a churl, dark and hideous, seated on a stump, who carried a mace, and wore no garment other than two bulls' hides, newly tanned. Calogrenant demanded, if he were a thing of good; the peasant replied, that he was a man, and that he herded the wild cattle who fed in that forest; on his part, he inquired of the stranger, who he might be; and Calogrenant responded, that he was a knight who sought and could not find. "And what do you seek?" "Adventures, to prove my prowess and courage." "Of adventure," replied the churl, "I have never heard, and know not what the word meaneth; but if thou wilt visit a fountain near at hand thou wilt scarce return, if thou performest its rite. 'T is a boiling spring, colder than marble, o'ershaded by the fairest of trees, that remaineth ever green; on the trunk hangeth an iron bowl, by a chain that reacheth to the well; beside is a stepping-stone, the like I never saw, and opposite a chapel, small, but fair. If thou wilt fill the bowl, and pour the water on the stone, thou shalt witness such a storm, that the very birds will flee the wood; if thou escape unharmed, thou wilt have better fortune than ever knight before."

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Calogrenant quitted the boor, who had pointed out the way; it was the third hour, and it might be noon before he came in view of the chapel, and of the tree, which was the fairest of pines; the stepping-stone was a single emerald, hollow, and mounted on four rubies, more radiant than the sun when it riseth in the orient. The knight crossed the stone with the water of the well; but he repented, and thought too much had he poured, for from every side lightnings flashed, and clouds threw rain and hail, until a hundred times he looked to be slain by the bolts that fell, and by the shattered trees. It lasted not long, before God restored fair weather, and the pine was covered with birds, that sang in accord, while each chanted his separate hymn. The knight rejoiced in their mirth, and listened until their service was o'er, for it seemed to him that never had he enjoyed music so sweet. After a little, he heard a noise, like the trampling of ten horses; when he saw that it was a single knight, he made haste to get on his steed; but the other, at the top of his voice, defied him, and cried: "Vassal, without challenge have you wrought me harm and shame! If I can, on your own head shall the injury light! Witness my wood that you have ruined, and my house whence you have driven

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me by lightning and rain! Of me shall you get no peace nor truce!" With that, they gript their shields, and encountered furiously; but the knight was taller by a head, and his horse stouter. Calogrenant's lance shivered, while the knight's, the hugest he had ever seen, remained whole; the blow was so rude that Calogrenant was cast flat on the ground, while the knight did not deign a second look, but took the charger, and went his way. Calogrenant knew not what to do, but bethought himself of his promise to his kind host; he laid down his arms, to proceed more lightly, and on foot arrived at the castle, where he was received with as much honor as on the day before, while the folk said, that never had they heard of any knight who had essayed that adventure, who had not been taken or slain.

¶ When Calogrenant had finished his story, Sir Ewain declared that it was his duty to avenge his cousin. Kay, who could never keep peace, exclaimed, that there were many words in a pot of wine; he asked Sir Ewain if his boots were scoured and his banners displayed, and if he meant to go that very night; he bade him not depart without taking leave, and if he had evil dreams, to stay at home. Queen Guinevere cried, that if she had Kay's

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tongue she would impeach it of high treason, for it made its master hated; but Sir Ewain responded, that it was proper to answer rudeness with courtesy, and he was no mastiff, to return another dog's growl. With that, the king issued from the chamber, while the barons rose to receive him; he bade them be seated, and the queen repeated Calogrenant's tale, word for word, for she was a good reciter. The king was fain to listen, and three great oaths he swore, by the soul of Uther Pendragon his sire, and by his son, and by his mother, that ere a fortnight's time, on St. John's eve, he would visit the fountain, to make the storm, and that he would take with him as many as desired to go. The count rejoiced, for barons and bachelors were eager to set out; but Sir Ewain was grieved, for he thought that Sir Gawain or Sir Kay would obtain the battle; he made up his mind that alone he would depart, and on the third day arrive in Broceliande, to witness the marvel and cause the tempest, and that he would tell no man, until he had gained great honor or shame. He stole to his inn, and bade his squire follow with his charger, while he himself rode out on his palfrey; the man obeyed, and found the horse ready, for not a nail was lacking; from the castle he issued, and followed the hoof-

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marks of his lord, whom he found waiting aloof from the high road. In this manner Sir Ewain took arms and went his way, to avenge his cousin.

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SIR Ewain roved, day by day, over hill and dale, until in Broceliande he found the thorny path, and knew he was on the right road. He received of the vavassour honor more than hath been recounted, and found the maid a hundred times more beautiful than Calogrenant had affirmed, for of noble knight and fair lady the whole truth cannot be told. On the morrow, he arrived at the clearing, where he saw the wild cattle and the ugly churl, on whom he gazed in wonder that Nature could create so hideous a thing. Without delay, he rode to the chapel, and poured the water from the bowl; it blew and rained, as usual, and when the storm was past, the birds made great joy about the perilous well. Before these had ended their song, appeared the knight, fiery wroth; the two charged one another, and with their rough lances dealt such blows that shields were pierced and mail unlinked, while the trenchant brands wounded the bare flesh. In the end, with a desperate stroke, Sir Ewain quartered the knight's helm, so that the blade bit to the brain; when he felt himself mortally hurt, the knight turned and fled, Sir Ewain after. At last, the knight came to his castle, where the bridge was down

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and the gate open; Sir Ewain followed, like a falcon that chaseth a crane, for he remembered Kay's bitter tongue, and hoped not to be credited, unless he brought back some true token.

In the streets they found neither man nor woman, and kept on, until they reached the palace-gate, fashioned like a trap that beheadeth the rat if he touch the key fastened to the knife; in like manner, a portcullis, sharp as a sword, was sustained by a lever, which threw down the gate, if any man passed through, unless in the middle. The knight kept the centre, while Sir Ewain leant forward and grasped the knight's saddle-bow; it was well that he stooped, for his horse trod on the pin, and the gate fell like a demon, cutting in twain the steed, and shearing his spurs, but doing no further harm. As he rode, the knight flung down a second portcullis, and in this manner Sir Ewain remained prisoner between the gates, in a room studded with golden nails and painted with rich hues; he was uneasy, but naught grieved him so much as that he knew not whither his enemy had fled.

He heard a door open, and beheld a fair maid, who was in dismay when she saw the guest. "Knight," she exclaimed, "you will be cut to pieces, if you are discovered here! I

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am sure 't is you who have slain my lord; my lady and her people would die of grief if they knew where you were; at present they are busy with their mourning, but when they seek you, you cannot escape." "If God will," he answered, "I shall not fall into their hands." "No," she returned, "for I will aid you, as erst you helped me when I was sent with a message to the court of the king; in that day I was not so discreet as a maid should be, and no man deigned to accost me, save only yourself; that boon I will recompense; I know you; you are Sir Ewain, son of King Urien." With that, she gave him a ring, of such virtue that if any man wore it, turning the stone inward, he became invisible, like the wood of a tree that the bark covereth. She ran to her chamber, and returned bringing a capon, wastel-bread, and wine; he, who was famished, ate and drank with pleasure. After this, she departed, forbidding him to stir.

On both sides of the portal gathered the folk, with swords and staves; they saw the half of the slain horse, and were certain of finding the enemy they longed to slay; but when they hoisted the gates, that had proved the death of many, they discovered the other half of the charger, but not the knight. With sticks and staves they thrust under the benches, but

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touched not the bed on which Sir Ewain lay.

¶ While they were searching, entered a fair lady, wild with grief; at every step she swooned, and could not be comforted for the sake of her lord, who lay dead on the bier. Behind her, in procession, came the holy water, cross, and candles, the nuns and the scripture, censers and clergy, occupied with the high office that is dear to the needy soul. When the bier had reached the middle of the hall, the blood flowed from the wound, sign of the presence of the slayer. The people wondered and cried that needs must they be enchanted, since they saw not the murderer; while the lady exclaimed: "Ha, ghost! cowardly thing, who wert so bold against my lord, why fearest thou me? Had he beheld thee, thou hadst not vanquished him; if thou wert mortal, thou hadst not dared to attack one who had no earthly peer." At last her people ceased their quest, and bore away the corpse; after the service, monks and nuns left the church and proceeded to the tomb. When the damsel returned, Sir Ewain begged that she would let him witness the procession; she led him to a loop-hole, through which he saw the fair lady, who cried: "Sir, on your soul may God have mercy, as never sat knight in saddle to

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vie with yourself! Largesse was your friend and courage your mate; fair sir, in the company of the saints be your soul!" So she wept, tearing her hair, rending her robes, and wounding her tender cheeks; Ewain could scarce refrain from running up and holding the hands that did such harm; but the damsel chid him, and departed, bidding him be quiet till she came, for she must mingle with the crowd, lest she should be suspected.

¶ Thus remained Sir Ewain, in the room between the gates, uneasy because he had no trophy to show; for so bitter was Kay, that he would be sure to jest with sarcasms that wound the heart. Yet he was consoled by new love, that had received him into its kingdom and made him its thrall; his enemy ruled his thoughts, and he loved one that hated him. Thus had the dame avenged her lord's death with a stroke sharper than that of sword or lance, for worse is the wound of love, the nearer is the physician who can heal. Of this harm can he never be cured, for to him hath love wholly surrendered itself, and gathered its fragments from the places where before had they been scattered.

¶ Now it hath been told how Sir Ewain became enamored of the lady whose husband he had slain; but it shall not here be fully recited

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in what manner he was able to obtain his desire. The damsel, whose name was Lunetta, was on such terms with her mistress, that she dared say anything she pleased; she counselled her, and said that it was not the custom of royal personages to mourn, and that she ought to reflect how she could defend her fountain, whither in a week would come King Arthur, as she had learned by the message of the wild damsel, who had arrived with letters; and she declared that God would send her a better husband. Her mistress was angry, but wished to know whom she meant; the damsel replied, that the man who had conquered her lord was a better knight than he, and that this was the husband whom she should marry to guard her fountain, for of her own knights none would dare take arms. At first the lady was wroth; but when she saw naught else to be done, she consented to marry the knight, if he were of rank equal to her own; and when she knew it was the son of King Urien, she allowed that it was more than she could have expected.

¶ When Lunetta had brought her mistress to consent, she pretended to send a boy, a fleet runner, to the court of King Arthur, in order to summon the knight; meantime she kept Sir Ewain, bathing him and adorning him fairly; when all was prepared, she announced

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that her messenger had returned, and that the knight had arrived. Thus Sir Ewain was brought to the presence of the dame, who presented him to her barons, and these insisted that she should accept him as her husband; accordingly, in their presence, she bestowed herself on Sir Ewain; from the hand of a chaplain he received Laudinè, daughter of Duke Laudunet, concerning whom is sung a lay. Present were many mitres and crosses, for she had summoned bishops and abbots; thus Sir Ewain became lord of the castle, and the people praised and honored the living more than ever they had done the dead.

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Leave of Absence

ON Saint John's eve, King Arthur, with all his chivalry, came to the fountain; he poured the water on the stone, and the rain fell in torrents. Forthwith, Sir Ewain took horse, and sped to the forest on a charger hardy and fleet; Sir Kay demanded the battle, and the king gave his consent. The knights put spurs to their steeds, and shivered their lances; Kay was flung head over heels, so that his helmet struck the earth. Sir Ewain did him no injury, but dismounted and took the horse, which he rendered to the king, who demanded his name; when Sir Ewain revealed himself, Kay was covered with shame. The rest made much of him, and above all, Sir Gawain, who loved his company more than that of any other knight. The king bade him tell how he had fared, and Sir Ewain related his adventures, from first to last, leaving nothing out. After that, he besought the king and his knights, for honor's sake, to become his guests. The king promised that he would stay a sennight; they mounted, and rode toward the castle. In advance Sir Ewain sent a squire, bearing a falcon, that his lady and her people might not be taken unawares, but have time to embellish the streets. When the

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folk of the castle heard, they were glad; the lady bade her knights go out to meet the king, and they were prepared to do her will.

¶ On great Spanish steeds they rode forth and saluted King Arthur and his retinue, crying: "Welcome this troop so full of worthies! Welcome to the king who leadeth them, and who giveth us so good a master!" The castle rang with joy; the streets were paved with silks and tapestries, and covered with curtains to keep off the sun; bells, horns, and trumpets made such a din, that if God had thundered in heaven it would not have been heard. Girls danced and sang, and flutes and tabors played, while youths leapt and did feats of skill. Lady Laudinè issued, in a robe of fresh ermine, crowned with a garland of rubies, as gay as any goddess; about her the folk thronged, and cried: "Welcome be the king of kings, and of the lords of the world!" When he perceived the lady, King Arthur made haste to dismount, while she saluted him, and exclaimed: "A hundred times welcome be the king my master, and Sir Gawain his nephew!" "On your gentle body and head, fair creature," replied the king, "joy and good fortune!" With that, King Arthur embraced her frankly, and she him.

So Sir Ewain had joy of the king's stay,

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and that week the knights spent their time in pleasure of wood and stream, while they who wished to see the land that Sir Ewain had won, rode out to solace themselves at the castles within three leagues or four. At last, when King Arthur had finished his sojourn and was willing to stay no longer, he bade his preparations be made.

¶ That week the companions of Sir Ewain had done their best to persuade him to go in their company. "What," cried Sir Gawain, "do you mean to be one of those who are spoiled by their wives?" "St. Mary's shame light on the man who is worsened by marriage! By a fair dame, be she wife or friend, a knight should be amended; he deserveth to lose her, if he forfeit his honor. Certes, she will be angry if he falleth away; if she loveth the man who loseth his renown, after he hath become lord of Love's realm, she will reclaim her love, and so she should. Therefore, first of all, enlarge your fame! Break the halter and let us rove, that you be not taken for jealous. You should joust and tourney, cost what it may. Fair comrade, do you maintain our friendship, for with me it will be eternal. 'T is strange that many prize the comfort they cannot lose; pleasure is sweetened by patience, and a small happiness is better than a great

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joy presently tasted. Delight of love, late to arrive, is like green wood, which burneth the hotter the longer it taketh to kindle. 'T is hard to abandon a habit; one trieth and faileth. If I had so fair a friend, by the faith I owe God and the Saints, I should be slow to quit her! But a man may give good counsel he cannot take, and many preachers there be who care not to practise their own lessons."

¶ Thus Sir Ewain was beset, until he promised to go, if his lady would let him; wisdom or folly, he could not repose until he had asked permission to return to Britain. He went to his wife, who guessed not his errand, and said: "Sweet lady, my health and joy, grant me a boon to your honor and mine!" In her innocence she answered: "Fair sir, command me in whatsoever you think right." With that, he begged leave to accompany the king, and attend tournaments, in order that he might not be esteemed a recreant knight. She replied: "I grant you my leave for a certain term. Be assured, if you exceed it, my love will turn to hate. If you wish to retain it and hold me precious, return within a year from the octave of St. John, which falleth today. At that time, if you be not present, you will have forfeited my love." Sir Ewain wept, and cried: "Lady, 't is too long; would I had

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the wings of a dove, that when I pleased I might abide with you. I implore God that He suffer me not to tarry. But men vow a thing, yet know not what will befall; perchance I may be detained by sickness or prison; you will do wrong not to except my bodily constraint." "Sir," she replied, "so I will; but I assure you, if God save you from death, you shall undergo no hardship so long as you remember me. Accept this ring, which hath such virtue, that its wearer cannot suffer imprisonment or wounds while he is mindful of his love; it shall be an armor stronger than iron, and serve you better than hauberk or shield. What I never bestowed on man, out of affection I give you." Sir Ewain took the ring, and shed tears as he received it.

¶ The king would wait no longer, but bade the palfreys be equipped; they were brought, and there was naught to do but mount. At parting were kisses, sprinkled with tears and sweetened with balm; it would be tedious to tell how the lady, with her damsels and seneschals, went forth to escort the king. Weeping, she besought him to return to her manor, and at last, with reluctance, repaired to her castle.

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Transgression and Sentence

WITH regret Sir Ewain parted from his lady, leaving his heart behind. The king took the body, but not the heart, which was so united to its fellow that it could not be removed. By miracle the body survived without the heart that would not follow, and the heart also longed with that hope which so often proveth false and breaketh covenant. If by a single day he exceed the term, his lady will never forgive; and, 't is to be feared, exceed he will, for Sir Gawain will not let him go while both attend tournaments wherever such are held. Thus passed the time, while Sir Ewain bore himself in such manner that Sir Gawain honored him and kept him until spent was that whole year and part of the next, in mid-August, when King Arthur was holding court in Chester.

¶ On the eve before, the friends had returned from a tourney, at which Sir Ewain had won the prize. The knights did not enter the city, but outside the wall pitched their pavilions, which were so thronged that the best knights did not attend the court of the king, but the king came to theirs and was seated in their circle, when Ewain bethought himself how he had quitted his lady; it astonished him to re-

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member that he had broken his word, and that the time was spent. For shame's sake he had ado to repress tears; while he was musing he saw approach a damsel, who rode a pied palfrey; she dismounted before the tent so suddenly that no man took her horse. When she saw the king, bareheaded as she was, she entered the pavilion, exclaiming that her lady saluted King Arthur, and all his knights, save only Sir Ewain the traitor, who had feigned to be a loyal lover, and had proven a thief. "This robber hath seduced my lady, who looked for no harm, and did not guess that he would steal her heart. So do not lovers, whate'er the unthinking say; the true lover borroweth the heart of his friend, and stealeth it not, but hath care that it be not plundered by thieves that resemble the worthy. Robbers and hypocrites are they who make theft of the heart they prize not; but the lover, go where he may, keepeth it and returneth it in safety. Sir Ewain hath destroyed my lady, who trusted that he should have retained her heart, and restored it, ere the year was spent. Ewain, forgetful wert thou, who couldst not remember that thou wert under obligation to return in a year. Respite she gave thee, until the feast of St. John; thou hast so scorned her that thou didst not bear it in mind. Meantime,

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my lady in her chamber hath painted the days and times; for he who loveth sleepeth never sound, but nightly numbereth the days as they come and go. Not without reason, nor untimely, cometh her plaint; not to quarrel I speak, but so much I say that thou hast betrayed us, thou who didst espouse my lady. Ewain, my lady careth for thee no longer; by my lips she commandeth thee never to return, and not to keep her ring. By me, here present, she biddeth thee deliver it; render it, for render thou must."

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Ewain's Despair

SIR EWAIN could not reply, for the blood left his veins, and his words failed. The damsel leapt, and took the ring from his finger; after that, she commended to God the king and his knights, save only Ewain, whom she left in woe. His sorrow increased, until he hated all that he saw and heard; he longed to fly, and go his way to a land so savage and solitary, that none would know or seek him, more than if he had been buried in the abyss. He hated himself, more than aught beside; he knew not wherewith to be comforted for the self himself had slain; he would rather go mad than be unavenged on the man who had robbed him of his joy. He went from among the barons, for he feared to lose his mind in their presence; they suffered him to depart, for they saw he did not care for their conversation or their world.

¶ Ewain pursued his way till he was far from the tents; on his head burst such a storm, that he went out of his mind; he rent his garments, and fled by field and meadow, leaving the court, who were dismayed, and wondered where he could be; at knightly inns, by hedges and orchards, they sought him in vain. He fled at speed, until in a park he found a lad,

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who carried a bow with five arrows, barbed and broad, and had wit sufficient to take from the boy the weapons he bore. He remembered naught of what aforetime he had been; he lay in wait for the beasts of the forest, slew them, and ate the venison raw.

¶ Thus, like a madman and savage, he dwelt in the wood, until on a day he came upon a hermit's cell, little and low, while the inmate was abroad. When the hermit saw the naked man, he perceived that he was mad, and in terror shut himself in his house; yet out of charity the good man took of his bread and water, and set it on the shelf of a little window. The madman, who longed for the bread, took it and tasted it; so coarse food had he never eaten; 't was sourer than leaven made of grain not worth five sous the bushel, made of barley pounded with straw, and withal stringy as bark; yet hunger constrained him, so that he thought it sweet, for to all meat hunger is a perfect sauce. He consumed it and liked it, drinking the cold water; after that, he returned to the forest, to shoot stags and roes. The hermit, when he saw him go, prayed God to hinder the wild man from coming again; but there is no creature, however simple, that will not return to the place where it hath been treated with kindness.

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¶ While Ewain was in this condition, not a day passed, that he did not bring to the cell some wild beast; the good man was at pains to flay the venison, and cook a sufficiency, while bread and water were always at the window to nourish the madman; thus, for food and drink, had he saltless venison and water of the well.

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Recovery

IN such state Sir Ewain remained, until so befell, that a lady, with two damsels of her house, found him asleep in the forest. One of the maidens dismounted and approached, but found no sign by which he might be recognized. At last, on the brow she noted a scar, which she was sure was Sir Ewain's; she knew it must be the same, but wondered what could have made him so indigent and bare. She did not rouse him, but crossed herself, and returned to her lady, shedding tears, and crying: "Lady, I have discovered Sir Ewain, the noblest of knights; one may see that he is not in his right mind, or he would not be in a condition so base. Would that God might restore his senses, and permit him to remain and assist you! Count Alier, who warreth on you, presseth you hard; your quarrel would be honorably ended, if God would grant you the good fortune, that he might espouse your cause!"

¶ Her mistress returned: "Have no fear, for if he doth not escape, we will remove from his brain this tempest; I bethink me of an ointment, given by Morgain the wise fairy, who promised there should be no madness it would not cure." They rode to the castle, half a

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league, as miles are counted in the country, where they reckon one for two, two for four. The lady unlocked her casket, and gave her damsel the box, bidding her rub only the temples, for the head alone was disturbed. She bid her take a vair robe, with coat and mantle of silk in grain; of her store, the girl added a shirt and loose breeches, with black boots of fair make, and led in her hand a spare palfrey. She rode fast, and found Ewain still asleep; she tied her horses, and approached; it was brave of her to venture within touch of the madman. She was so anxious, that she chafed him from head to foot in the warm sun, using all the ointment, until the melancholy quitted his brain. She took the box, and ran back to her horse, where she concealed herself behind a huge oak, until Sir Ewain came to himself.

¶ When he awakened, and found himself ivory bare, he was ashamed, and wondered whence came the raiment, crying out that he was undone, if any who knew him had seen him in such state. He clothed himself, and gazed through the forest, in search of some friend; his sickness had worn on him so much that he was unable to stand erect. When she saw him recovered, the damsel mounted, and rode as if she knew nothing, straying this way and

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that, until Sir Ewain cried: "Damsel, hither! hither!" With that, she ambled, and demanded: "Sir knight, what would you, that you summon me so urgently?" "Ha! wise damsel, you find me in this wood, by what mischance wot I not. For God's love, and Christian faith, lend me or give me the palfrey you lead." "Sir, willingly! but attend me to the place whither I journey." "Where is that?" "Forth from this forest, to a castle yonder." "Damsel, am I needed?" "Aye sir, but methinks you are not well. You must tarry at least a fortnight; take this horse, and we will go to the hostel."

℄ Ewain, who asked no better, took the horse and mounted; they rode on, until they came to a bridge over a noisy torrent; the damsel threw in the box, for she meant to excuse herself to her lady, on the ground that she had slipped, and lost the box in the stream, while her palfrey stumbled, and had almost fallen in. In the castle, the lady received Sir Ewain with joy; when she was alone with her damsel, she asked for the box, and the girl told her story; her mistress said it was sad, but there was no help. "Ofttimes we get our harm, when we seek our good; so hath chanced to me, who have parted with my best treasure; yet I desire to serve him as well as I may."

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"Lady, you say well; to double the loss would be a sorry game."

¶ Of the box no more was said, but they eased Sir Ewain the best they could, bathing him and shaving his face, for his beard had grown thick enough to pluck. He asked for arms, and they were brought; he desired a steed, and they gave him a charger fleet and strong. So time went on, till on a day, to the castle came Count Alier with knights and servants, to burn and spoil; the folk took horse, and rode out, until they came on the count's prickers, who would not fly, but awaited them at a pass. Ewain, whose strength had returned, charged, and smote a knight in such wise that he made a heap of man and horse, and the rider fell to rise no more. After that, he wheeled, and made another onset, to clear the road; quicker than one could count, he unhorsed four cavaliers. His comrades grew bold, for faint heart, when he seeth a valiant deed, is seized with shame, and casteth out the heart that was his, to take that of a hero. From the tower, the lady saw the mellay, and the ground covered with dead and wounded, but more of her foes than her friends, for Sir Ewain had them at his mercy, as the falcon the larks. The people looked and cried: "Ha, the brave knight! he maketh our knights

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bold, for never lance would have been shivered, save for himself. See how he attacketh and turneth, pauseth, and resumeth the fray! If the wood were made of lances, by night none would be left, for they could not be supplied so fast as he breaketh them! Roland, at Roncesvaux, ne'er wrought such wonders with his sword Durandal! If any of his mates accompanied him, the foe who plagueth us would fly in dismay, or remain in disgrace!" They exclaimed, that happy would be the woman on whom his love should be bestowed, for he outshone the rest, as the moon the stars, or the sun the moon. One and all, they wished that he had wedded their lady, and might judge their land.

¶ Sir Ewain pursued the flying foes, and his companions followed, as safe in his presence as if enclosed with a wall. The chase continued until the fugitives grew weary, and their pursuers overtook them and slew their steeds, killing and wounding. The count fled, and Ewain followed, until he came up with the count at the foot of a hill, close to one of his strongholds. When they stood man to man, no escape was possible; Sir Ewain took the count's oath, that he would render himself to the Lady of Noroison, and make peace on her own terms; he forced him to doff his

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helmet, remove the shield from his neck, and surrender his naked sword; in this manner Sir Ewain brought him in, and gave him up. The tidings were told; men and women issued, the lady at their head; Ewain presented his prisoner, whom he held by the hand; the count took oaths and gave pledges that he would keep the peace, make good the losses which could be proved, and rebuild the castles he had razed.

¶ When this was done, Sir Ewain asked leave to go; the lady refused, for she would have had him take her for friend or wife; he would not accompany her a step, but went his way regardless of her entreaties. The happier he had made her, the more grieved was she now, for she longed to do him honor, and make him master of all her possessions; or else, had he been willing to serve her, she would have given him great wages. He refused to listen, and parted from the knights, who were sorry, but could not detain him.

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The Lion and the Serpent

N sad thoughts Ewain proceeded through a thick wood, until he heard a loud shriek, and made in that direction. When he arrived in a clearing, he saw a lion, whom a serpent held by the tail, and scorched with the flame which issued from its jaws. Ewain made up his mind to succor the lion, for a venomous and wicked creature deserveth no mercy; he drew his sword, and protected his face with his shield, that he might not be parched with the fire which issued from the gaping throat. With his sharp sword he attacked the snake, and made two halves of him, striking over and over until he had minced him small; needs must he sever part of the lion's tail, to set him free.

¶ After he had delivered the lion, Ewain thought that he would be obliged to fight a second battle; but the lion extended his paws, and kneeled, with tears of humility; Ewain saw that the creature was grateful, and did him homage, because he had saved him from death. The adventure pleased him; from his sword he wiped away the poison, and thrust it back into the scabbard; after that he resumed his journey. The lion kept by his side, resolved not to quit the master whom he meant

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to serve and protect so long as he lived. He went on, until down the wind he smelt deer feeding, and Nature bade him chase them, to obtain food; he started on the trail, to show that he had taken the scent, then stopped and looked back, in token that he wished to obey his lord, and would not advance unless he pleased. Ewain perceived that if he paused, the lion would stand, and otherwise would seize the venison; he cried him on, as if it had been a hound. The lion had not gone a bow-shot before in a valley he found a roe pasturing; at the first bound he seized his prey, and drank the warm blood; he flung the roe on his back, and carried him until he reached Sir Ewain, who was pleased with the love which the beast showed. Night was at hand; Ewain determined to encamp on the spot, and flay the roe; on the back he made incision, and cut a slice; he struck fire from a flint, caught it on dry twigs, and on a spit roasted the meat. In the meal was small pleasure, for he had neither bread nor wine, cloth nor knife. While he ate, the lion did not stir, but waited until the knight had sated his hunger; after that, he devoured the remainder to the very bone. Ewain reposed his head on his shield and slept, while the lion waked and watched the horse, who fed on the sprouting grass.

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The Prisoner in the Chapel

AT morn, Ewain and his lion proceeded, and for a week led the same life, until fortune led them to the fountain under the pine. When Sir Ewain approached, he almost went out of his mind; a thousand times he called himself wretch, and swooned away beside the stone. The sword slid from his shield, and the point pressed his neck; the rings of the mail gave way, so that blood flowed, while the lion thought he beheld the death of his companion and lord. The beast writhed and shrieked, and would have killed himself with the same weapon which had slain his master; with his teeth he set it against a stump, and placed a log behind, that the blade might not swerve. The knight came to himself, and the lion paused, when he was rushing on death as madly as a wild boar, that careth not where he striketh.

¶ After he revived, Ewain blamed himself, and cried: "Why doth he not take his own life, the wretch whose joy is undone? How can I remain, and behold what belongeth to my lady? In a body so sad, what hath the spirit to do? To equal torture it could not go. Have I not seen this lion grieve in such manner that he wished to perish on my

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sword? Ought death to seem dreadful to me, who have transformed to woe my own delight? The man who cheateth himself of bliss hath no right to fortune."

¶ While he spake, a lady who was imprisoned in the chapel heard and saw him through the ruined wall. When he recovered, she exclaimed: "What do I hear? Who is it that lamenteth?" "And you," he cried, "who are you?" "A wretched creature, the most miserable alive." "Hush, silly thing! Thy pain is joy compared to that of which I pine; the happier one hath lived, the more he feeleth sorrow; a weak man, by habit, beareth the load a strong one could never lift." "'T is true, yet it doth not prove that you are more unfortunate than I; you have power to journey whithersoever you will, but I am shut up here, and to-morrow must undergo the sentence of death." "Ha, for what crime?" "Sir, may God have mercy on my soul, as I deserve it not; I am charged with treason, if I find not a defender who will save me from being hung or burned." "Then, I can affirm that my grief exceedeth yours, for you may be delivered; is it not so?" "Aye, but by whom I know not. The world hath but two men who for my sake would do battle one against three." "How, are they three?" "Aye, three who call

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me traitor." "And who love you so much that they would fight in order to save you?" "I will tell you; one is Sir Gawain, and the other Sir Ewain, for whose sake I must to-morrow be abandoned to death." "For whom? What have you said?" "Sir, for the son of King Urien." "I hear you, but unhelped you shall not die. Myself am that Ewain for whose sake you tremble. I think you are she who delivered me when I was shut between the gates; dead or captive had I been, were it not for you. Tell me, sweet friend, who are these that have imprisoned you here?" "Since you wish to learn, I will conceal it no longer; at my advice my lady took you for her lord; by the Holy Paternoster, I did it more for her sake than for yours. After the term had passed at which you had promised to return, wroth was my lady; and when it became known to the seneschal, who hated me because my lady had more confidence in me than in him, he charged me, in open court, of betraying her for your sake. I, who had no counsel save in myself, knowing that of treason had I never dreamt, wildly responded that I would cause myself to be defended by one knight against three. In his discourtesy, he took me at my word; within forty days, against their three gages, must I offer a

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champion. I was at the court of King Arthur, and found no counsel, nor any man who could tell me where you were to be found." "Where was Sir Gawain, the frank, the sweet, whose aid was never wanting to uncounselled damsel?" "Had he been at court, he would not have refused me aught; but they told me that the queen had been carried off by a knight, after whom the king in his madness had sent her; I think it was Kay who guided her; Sir Gawain had gone in quest, and would not return until he had found her. I have told you truth; to-morrow, for your sake, I must perish by a cruel death."

Ewain returned: "God forbid that you should suffer for me! To-morrow, I will appear, in all my might, to set my life on your rescue. Tell no man who I am! Whatever arrive, have a care that I be not known!" "Sir, since you desire, tortures shall not make me reveal it; prithee, go not for my sake; I thank you, but acquit you of your pledge. 'T is better die alone than witness their pleasure in your ruin; after you are slain, I should not escape." "Sweet friend, these are tiresome words! Either you wish not to be delivered or you despise my comfort. Since you served me so well, I ought not to fail you; if God will, all three shall be brought to

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confusion. I must depart, or spend the night in this forest, where I know not of any lodging." "Sir, God send you a good hostel and a good night, and protect you, according to my petition."

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Harpin of the Mount

SIR EWAIN proceeded, followed by his lion, until he came to a strong castle. Varlets leapt, and lowered the gates; when they saw the lion, they were frightened, and begged that he might be left outside. Ewain replied: "Speak not of that! without him I will not enter, for I love him as myself; be not afraid, I will keep him safe." In the castle, he found knights and ladies, who disarmed him, and cried: "Fair sir, welcome! God grant, that your sojourn may turn to your pleasure and honor!" So speaking, they led him in, but presently fell to weeping. Sir Ewain asked the lord of the manor: "In God's name, fair sweet sir, why is it that you both rejoice and weep?" "Sir, take it not to heart." "I cannot see you in distress, and have no share; I must know, what sorrow ought to be mine." "Then, I will tell you. A giant demandeth my daughter, who passeth in beauty all maids of the world; his name is Harpin of the Mount, and daily he ravageth as much as he may. Six sons had I, the fairest of knights; two hath he already slain, and made captive the other four, whom to-morrow he will destroy, if I find not a champion to battle with him, or

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resign my daughter, whom he saith he will throw to his grooms, for take her himself he will not deign. To-morrow, if God counsel me not, this woe will befall; then 't is not strange if we weep; yet we make smiling faces, for unwise is he who doth not honor the worthy. I have told you our trouble; no stronghold hath the giant left me, other than this; you yourself hath seen, how outside of these new walls he hath spoiled the country; what he desireth, he hath taken, and burned the remainder."

¶ Sir Ewain listened, and said: "Sir, it amazeth me, why you have not sought counsel at the court of King Arthur, for none is so strong but there his match may be found." The baron answered, that he would have been well helped, if he could have found Sir Gawain: "I should not have been denied, for my wife is his sister; but a knight of a foreign country carried off the queen, whom he came to seek, and Kay so deceived the king, that he gave him his wife to escort; foolish were they, to trust his guidance; 't is myself who is the loser, for Sir Gawain, had he known, would have sped hither; but now he wotteth not, and hath gone in pursuit of the knight who hath stolen the queen."

¶ When Ewain heard, he sighed, and an-

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swered: "Fair sweet sir, I will undertake the adventure, if the giant come early; at noon I must be elsewhere." "Fair sir, your mercy," cried the nobleman, and the folk of the castle did the like.

¶ Forth came the fair maid, her eyes on the ground; her mother went beside, for the lord of the house had summoned them, that the stranger might behold. They were wrapt in their mantles, to conceal their tears; but the master bade them open their robes and raise their heads: "Be not amazed, for God hath sent a noble knight, who offereth to do battle with the giant. Quick, throw yourselves at his feet!" "God forbid," cried the guest, "that the sister and niece of Sir Gawain should prostrate themselves before me! I will thank them, if they will be of comfort until the morrow, and see whether God meaneth to counsel them. No need to ask more, than that the giant come early; for by to-morrow, at noon, must I be engaged in the most important task that ever could I undertake." Men and women thanked him, and took heart, trusting him because of the lion, who lay at his feet like a lamb. When it was time, they led him to a richly painted chamber, where the damsel and her mother were at his bedding; he and his lion slept, whilst none durst

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approach; they shut the door, so that none might issue until morning dawned.

¶ On the morrow, when dawned the day, Sir Ewain heard mass, and waited till prime; then he cried: "Sir, it grieveth me, I can tarry no longer; if I had no errand, I would linger yet a while, for the sake of my dear Sir Gawain!" At these words, the maiden's blood boiled for fear; her parents would have thrown themselves at Ewain's feet, had they not remembered that he liked it not. The lord of the castle offered him land and goods, but he responded: "God forbid that I should accept aught!" Trembling, the maid besought him to delay, for the sake of the glorious queen of heaven and the angels, in behalf of God, and because of her uncle, whom he said he knew and loved. Pity seized him, when he heard himself accosted in the name of the man dearest to him, by the lady of heaven, God best of all, and the sweetness of pity; his heart was rent in twain; to win a kingdom, he would not have had burned her whom he had promised to save; he would die or go mad, if he came not in time. Howbeit, he remained until the giant arrived, leading the knights, whom oft he thrust with a sharp stake which on his shoulder he bore. The youths, in naught but foul shirts, were bound hand and

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foot, and rode four stumbling ponies, famished and faint. A puffed dwarf had tied together the tails of the horses, and went beside, proudly beating them with a four-knotted scourge. Before the gate, in a plain, the giant paused, and shouted to the lord of the castle, that he would put his sons to death, unless he rendered the girl, whom he would fling to his grooms, the worst he had, for he was followed by a thousand, ribald and bare.

¶ The worthy man went near wild, when he heard that he must abandon his daughter, or see his sons slain before his eyes; he sorrowed, like a man who wisheth death more than life; but Ewain the frank exclaimed: "Sir, wicked is this giant, who yonder boasteth! God will not let him harm your daughter, whom he scorneth and insulteth. Hither, my arms and steed! One must fall, he or I. If I can humble the felon, and free your sons, I will commend you to God and go my way!" They brought horse and arms, and did their best to array him; the gates were lowered and he issued, while his lion did not stay behind. The folk commended him to God the Saviour, for they feared that the miscreant, whom they had seen slay many another worthy, would do as much for him.

¶ In fury, the giant advanced and said: "By

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mine eyes, he loved thee not, who sent thee! He hath finely avenged himself, for the affront thou didst him!" Sir Ewain, who was hot to be gone, cried: "No more! Do thy best, and I mine, for words tire me!" With that, he aimed at the giant's breast, which was clad with bearskin, such a blow, that the hide gave way, and the blood wet the lance; on his part, the giant returned a stroke that made him totter. Sir Ewain drew his sword, and found the giant bare, for out of pride he deigned not to wear armor; with his blade, he clove away a piece of the cheek, while the giant struck him with his stake, so hard that he beat him down on the neck of his horse. With that, the lion made a spring, to aid his lord; like bark he rent the shaggy hide, and tore the giant's haunch, nerve and sinew. The giant turned, bellowing like a bull, and lifted his stake, but missed the lion, who bounded back; before the giant could recover, Ewain put in two blows; with the edge of his sword, he severed the shoulder, and thrust the point through the liver; the giant fell with a crash like a great oak.

¶ When the folk on the battlements saw, it might be known which was swiftest of foot, for they sped like hounds to the flaying of the prey. The nobleman ran, with his wife and

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daughter, and happy were the four brothers who had suffered so much wrong. Sir Ewain they knew would not stay, until his errand had been accomplished; they begged him to return, and tarry in their castle. He answered, that he could make no promise, for he knew not what would happen, but so much he desired, that the daughter and the four sons would join hands, and with the dwarf seek Sir Gawain, to relate the story, for unrewarded is kindness, save it be known. They replied, that it should not be hidden, for it would not be right, and asked: "What shall we say, when we come into his presence? Whom can we praise, seeing that we know not your name?" "You may say, that I am called the Knight of the Lion. Tell him, that he knoweth me well, but not who I am. I fear that I have delayed too long, for ere noon passeth I have enow to do, if I arrive in time." With that, he departed; the nobleman would have had him take his four sons, but he would not let it be.

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The Rescue of Lunetta

S fast as his horse would carry him, Sir Ewain sped to the chapel. Before he arrived, the damsel had been brought out, and the fagots piled; in her shift, she was tied to the stake, by men who accused her of a thing of which she had never dreamed. Ewain galloped, shouting: "Wicked people, let the damsel be! She ought not to be burned, for she hath done no harm!" The folk parted, and let him pass; he longed to gaze on the lady, whom his heart beheld wherever he was; he looked till he found her, and curbed his heart, like a steed impatient of the rein. As he gazed, he let not his sighs be heard, but repressed them with pain. Pity seized him, while he heard the poor dames, who grieved one to another. "Ha, God, thou hast forgotten us! Deserted shall we remain, losing the protection of such a friend. Now will be none to say; this coat and mantle, give them to yonder poor lady; they will be well spent, for much hath she suffered! Such speech will be heard no more, for none remaineth frank and courteous, but each demandeth for himself what on another he would not bestow, unless on one who needed it not."

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¶ Thus they bewailed, while Sir Ewain listened, and saw Lunetta kneeling in her shift; she had made confession, and besought God to have mercy on her sins. He, who loved her, advanced, and exclaimed: "My damsel, where are your accusers? Their battle is ready, if they refuse it not." She, who looked up for the first time, cried: "Sir, on God's part, you come at my great need! A little more, I had been burned to ashes. God strengthen you, as I am innocent of the crime whereof I am accused!"

¶ At these words, the seneschal and his brothers said: "Ha, woman, miser of truth and spendthrift of lies! Fool is the man who for thy sake undertaketh such a task! He is one, and we are three; I advise him to withdraw, ere he come to harm." Weary of the words, Ewain replied: "Let him who feareth, fly! I do not so much dread your three shields, as without a blow to own myself vanquished. I bid you acquit the damsel, whom you have wickedly belied; she saith, and I believe her, that she never betrayed her lady. If I can, I will defend her; truth to tell, God is with right, and God and right belong together; since these are on my side, I have better company than thou, and better aid." The other returned, that he might do his worst, but the

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lion should not interfere. Ewain responded, that he had not brought his lion to fight, but if the lion attacked him, he would not be responsible. The seneschal answered: "Return, unless you make your lion keep the peace; it would be wise; in this country all folk know, that the damsel hath betrayed her lady, and merited the flame." "May it not please the Holy Spirit! God will not suffer me to go, until I have delivered her." He bade his lion lie down, and the beast obeyed.

¶ No more words; Sir Ewain took ground, and the knights galloped to meet him; he paced, for at the outset he did not wish to ride fast. The three broke their lances on his shield, while his own remained whole; he wheeled, and retreated a rood, then turned, and smote the seneschal, who was in advance, so hard that he cast him on the ground, where he lay stunned; the others, with their swords, gave great blows, but received worse, for one of his matched two of theirs; in this manner he defended himself, until the seneschal rose, and did his utmost. The lion thought that it was time to help, while the ladies, who loved the damsel, offered prayers to God that he would not permit her champion to be overcome. At the first onset, the lion dealt the seneschal, who was on foot, such a blow that

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the mail flew like straw, and dragged him about the field, until the tendon was torn from his shoulder, and the man could not escape death; after that, he attacked the rest. Sir Ewain tried to prevent him, but the beast would not be controlled; 't is like he knew that his master was glad of his help; he assailed the brothers, until they turned on him, and maimed him. When Sir Ewain saw that his lion was wounded, he was wroth, and pressed his enemies so hard, that they put themselves at his mercy; he was hurt, but his own wounds did not trouble him so much as the injuries of his lion. Thus had he delivered the damsel, whom her lady forgave; the accusers were burned at the fire they had kindled, for it is just that he who wrongfully judgeth another should himself perish.

¶ Lunetta was overjoyed now that she was at peace with her lady; the folk of the castle were glad, and offered their services to the man who was their master, had they known the truth. The lady who owned his heart besought him to stay until he had recovered, but he replied: "Lady, it will not be now that I stay, until my lady hath pardoned me; when her anger is appeased, my troubles will be ended." "Indeed," she said, "I am sorry; discourteous, methinks, is the dame who is cruel

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to you. She should not deny her door to a knight of your worth, unless too grievous hath been his offence." "Lady, whatever I suffer, her will is my pleasure; inquire no more, for the fault I will not reveal; be it told by those who know." "Are there any who know save yourself?" "Aye, lady." "Fair sir, tell me your name, and go free." "Free, lady? Not so; I am debtor, more than words may tell; yet I must conceal my name; you will never hear me called aught, save the Knight of the Lion. 'T is the title by which I desire to be known." "In God's name, fair sir, how cometh it that we have never heard your name mentioned?" "Lady, hence may you perceive how small is my renown." She said again: "If it would not distress you, I would urge you to stay." "Lady, I would never dare, unless I knew with certainty, that I should have the grace of my lady." "Then, fair sir, depart; may God go with you, and, if He pleaseth, turn to gladness your present pain." "Lady," he answered, "may God hear you!" and he added between his teeth: "Lady, 't is you who carry the key of my heart and the casket of my joy, yet know it not."

¶ With that, Sir Ewain parted in sadness, followed by Lunetta, who attended him a long way; he entreated her not to reveal the name

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of her champion, and she promised that it should not be told. He begged her to bear him in mind, and recommend him to her lady when she had the power; this she pledged herself to do, and bade him hush, for she was not ungrateful.

¶ A hundred times Sir Ewain thanked her, and went on pensive, on account of his lion, who could not keep up; with moss and reeds he made a litter of his shield, and laid the lion on the reverse as gently as he could. So he went, carrying the lion, until he came to the gate of a mansion strong and fair. He found it closed, and called; at the first word, the porter opened, grasped his rein, and exclaimed: "Sir, advance; I offer you the hostel of my lord, if it pleaseth you to alight." "I take it," he said, "for 't is time."

¶ They passed the gate and found the household, who saluted him and made him dismount on the step; some relieved him of his shield, while others took his horse; the rest received his arms, and bore tidings to their lord. When he heard, the master of the castle descended into the courtyard and saluted him, followed by his wife, with their sons and daughters. When they saw that he was hurt, they took him and his lion to a quiet chamber, where two daughters of the house, who had skill in

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surgery, busied themselves in healing his wounds. There he remained, how many days the story sayeth not, until both were fit for the road.

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MEANTIME, Death had so argued with the Lord of the Black Thorn that needs must he die; after he had departed, the elder of his two daughters declared that she would have the whole of the estate, and her sister should get no part. The younger said that she would go to the court of King Arthur, and ask for a champion to maintain her right. When the elder perceived that her sister would not abandon her claim, she grew anxious, and determined that she would be beforehand; accordingly, she arrayed herself, and roved until she arrived at court. The younger followed, and made what haste she could, but wasted her steps, for already had her sister made her suit to Sir Gawain, who granted her request, on condition that she should not let it be known who her champion was to be.

¶ In a mantle of scarlet and ermine, the younger sister arrived at court on the third day after the queen had been rescued, and Lancelot imprisoned in the tower. On the same day came news of the wicked giant, whom the Knight of the Lion had destroyed; on the latter's part, appeared the nephews of Sir Gawain, who greeted him, reciting the

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great service which the knight had rendered in delivering his niece, and declared that he knew him well, though not who he was. It came to the ears of the girl, who was desperate, because she could find no counsel; she had entreated Sir Gawain, who replied: "Friend, you urge me in vain, for I have other business which I cannot let go." Forthwith, the damsel came before the king, and said: "King, I came to seek counsel, and none can I get; 't is strange that I cannot obtain advice or aid, yet I should act unwisely if I departed without leave. Let my sister know that for love she shall have whatever she will; but perforce I will not surrender my heritage if I can find counsel." The king returned: "You speak well; while she is present, I advise her to let you retain your right."

¶ Her sister, who was certain of the best knight in the world, replied: "Sir, God confound me if I leave her city or castle, forest or field! if here be any knight who will take arms to maintain the justice of her cause, let him advance." "Your offer is not just," answered the king; "there is more to be done; if she desireth, she hath right to a respite of forty days, by the rule of all courts." The older sister returned: "Fair sir king, you may establish your own laws according to your

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good pleasure, and it befitteth me not to dispute your commandment; I must accept the interval, if she asketh it." The younger said that she desired it greatly; she commended the king to God, and went her way, resolved to search through the world until she should find the Knight of the Lion, who spent his pains in counselling such as had need.

¶ On her quest she roved through many a land, but could obtain no news, until she fell sick of grief. By good fortune she came to the house of an acquaintance who loved her, and detained her until she had related her story; while she lay ill, another maid undertook the quest. The latter departed, and ambled all day, fast as her palfrey would carry her, until came on a dark night. What doubled her distress was that the rain poured, as if God were angry, while she journeyed through a deep forest; the road was so bad that her horse was up to the girths in mire, and the night so obscure that she could not see her beast. She appealed to God and his mother, and to all saints, male and female, with many orisons, that she might be guided to a shelter, and led out of the wood. At last, she heard a horn blow, and thought she would find a house; she addressed herself to the sound, until she came to a road which led in the

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direction of the noise, for the horn sounded thrice, with a loud note; on the right she found a cross, and made haste, until she approached a bridge, and perceived the white walls and barbican of a round tower; the horn she had heard was that of a watchman, who was stationed on the wall. When he saw her, he saluted her and descended, bringing the key, and saying: "Damsel, welcome, whomsoever you may be! To-night you shall be well lodged." "'T is all I ask," she answered, and he admitted her. Within the castle, she was put at her ease; after the meal, she conversed with her host, who inquired whither she went, and what she sought. She replied, forthwith: "I seek a man whom I have never seen; he hath with him a lion, and 't is said if I can find him I may depend upon him." "Yea," cried the nobleman, "as I myself can witness, for yesterday did God send him hither, at my utmost necessity; blessed be the path whereby he came to my hostel! he avenged me of a mortal foe, whom he slew before my eyes, to my great joy. To-morrow shalt thou behold the body of a huge giant, whom he killed so quickly that scarce did he turn a hair." "For God's sake," cried she, "tell me whither went he, and where doth he sojourn?" "I know not, but to-morrow I will put you on the road

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whereby he departed." "May God," she exclaimed, "bring me where I may obtain true tidings, for great would be my joy!"

¶ So they conversed, until it was time to be bedded; when dawn appeared, the damsel rose, eager to find the man she sought. The master of the house and his companions escorted her, and put her on the straight way to the fountain beneath the pine. She asked the first persons she met, if they could tell where she might find a knight, who was accompanied by a lion. They answered, that on the same spot had they seen him vanquish three knights. "In God's name," cried she, "if you know more, hide it not." "Nay, we know only as much as we have been told; what became of him, none knoweth, unless it be the damsel for whose sake he came. If you would speak to her, you have not far to go; she is praying to God, in yonder monastery, where she hath tarried so long, that by this time her prayers must be over."

¶ While they were speaking, Lunetta issued, and they said: "There she is!" The two saluted one another, and the damsel put her question. Lunetta answered, that she would cause her palfrey to be harnessed, and conduct her to the wood where she had quitted the knight; the girl returned thanks, and the

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horse was brought. As they rode, Lunetta related how she had been accused of treason, how the fire had been lighted at which she was to have been burned, and how the knight had come to her aid, in her great need. So speaking, she brought the damsel to the road where she had parted from Sir Ewain, and said: "Go yonder, until you come to a place where you will get news, if it pleaseth God and the Holy Spirit. Here, or not far away, I left him, and what hath since become of him know I not; when he quitted me, his wounds needed care. May God, if He will, permit you to find him to-night or to-morrow! I commend you to God; I can accompany you no further, for my lady would be wroth."

℄ Lunetta returned, while the damsel proceeded alone, until she came to the castle where Ewain had been healed. Before the gate she saw knights, ladies, and servants, with the lord of the house; she saluted them and inquired if they could give her news of a knight she sought. "Who is he?" they asked. "One, as hath been told me, that is always accompanied by a lion." "By my faith, girl," said the nobleman, "he parted but now; if you can follow his hoof-tracks, you may overtake him, if you wait not too long." "Sir, God forbid! Which way went he?" "By

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yonder straight road," said they, and besought her to salute him; she did not wait to hear, but galloped over hill and plain, until she came in sight of Ewain and his lion. She was rejoiced, and cried to herself: "Ah, now I see him whom I have followed so long, and tracked so well! But how will it help me, if I overtake him and do not succeed!"

¶ Speeding so fast that her palfrey was all of a foam, she came up with Sir Ewain and saluted him. He answered: "Fair, may God keep you, and preserve you from pain!" "And you, sir, in whom I trust, that you may be able to dispel my care!" With that, she joined him, and cried: "Sir, I have sought you long; the fame of your worth has caused me to follow over many a land. God be thanked that I have found you at last! If I have suffered, I am eased; my trouble was over when I beheld you. 'T is no errand of mine; I come from one better than myself, more worthy and gentle. If you fail her, your renown is undeserved, for she hopeth no other succor. By you my damsel trusteth to maintain her quarrel against the sister who hath disinherited her. None can persuade her, that she can be aided by another person. If you prove her to be in her right, you will learn the love of the oppressed, and increase your fame. She would

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herself have entreated the help she needeth, unless sickness had compelled her to keep her bed. So please you, reply, whether you will venture to come, or whether you will wait and rest?" "Not I," he returned: "no man winneth honor by rest, nor will I repose, but follow you, sweet friend, whithersoever you please. If she of whom you speak placeth confidence in me, let her not despair, for I will do my utmost. God give me grace, that by good fortune, I may be able to maintain her right!"

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The Castle of Worst Adventure

SIR EWAIN and his damsel pursued their journey, until they approached the castle of Worst Adventure; they desired not to proceed further, for the day was declining. They turned toward the castle, while the folk who met them shrieked: "Ho, wretch, whither? Here shalt thou be so dealt with, that by thee the tale shall never be told!" "Tiresome people," he answered, "why bark after me thus?" An ancient dame exclaimed: "They say it, not out of malice, but to warn you, wherefore they dare not tell; 't is their custom so to address all comers. The rest is at thine own choice; none barreth thy road. Go, if thou wilt, but I advise thee return." "Lady, I think I should do well to take your counsel; yet where to lodge I know not." "'T is naught to myself; go whither thou pleasest; yet I should be glad, if I saw thee safe." "Lady, God reward you! but I will go whither my heart urgeth." So speaking, he came to the gate, with his lion and maiden; the porter opened and cried: "Enter, enter quickly! you will be safely kept, and you are ill come!"

¶ Sir Ewain made no reply, but entered, and in front of a new hall saw a green, fenced with sharp stakes; in the close sat three hundred

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maidens, busy with work of silk and gold; they looked poor, for their robes were loose, their shifts stained, and their faces pinched with want. When they saw the knight, they sobbed and remained silent, their eyes fixed on the ground. The porter ran up, and cried to Ewain: "Fair sir, not now! You should have thought before you entered, for depart you cannot." "Nor would I, fair brother! By the soul of my father! Whence come yonder damsels, who weave the silk and the gold? I like their work, but not their looks; methinks they would be fair, had they their pleasure." "Ask another!" With that, Sir Ewain found a gate, entered the close, and saluted the maids; seeing them weep, he exclaimed: "May God, if he pleaseth, alter this grief to joy!" "May the God whom you have addressed hear you!" they responded; "it seemeth, you wish to know who we are." "'T is even for that I came." "Sir, long ago, the King of the Isle of Maidens roved to get news of strange countries; in evil hour, his folly led him hither, wherefore we wretches suffer pain undeserved; on a day, my lord came to this hold, where dwell two sons of fiend and woman, who fought with him, and took him like a lamb, for he hath only years eighteen; to ransom his life, the king swore that he would send

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thirty maidens of his country, every year that he lived, and for this tribute was set free. On the day the miscreants are vanquished, the obligation will be ended, and we ourselves delivered. Until that time, we enjoy nothing; our speech is folly, for our freedom will never arrive. Silken stuffs daily we weave, and dress no better, but go poor and naked, hungry and thirsty; more we cannot earn, but of our toil get four pence in the pound, wherewith we cannot buy food or clothing sufficient; for one who gaineth twenty sous a week is scarce easy; none of us but earneth twenty sous, or more, a sum which would enrich a duke; so we remain indigent, and wealthy becomes the man for whose sake we toil all day and great share of the night; for he menaceth to maim us, when we leave off. Why more? I could not narrate the fifth part of our distress and disgrace. And what vexeth us is to see perish the noble knights who do battle with the unbelievers, and pay dear, as you will soon do; lief or loath, you must fight with the sons of demons, or lose your renown." "The true and spiritual God defend me, and redeem you, if such be his pleasure! I must see what cheer yonder folk will make." "Sir, proceed, and be protected by Him, who is the distributer of every blessing!"

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¶ Sir Ewain and his companions found the hall empty, and came to an orchard, where they left their horses, of which servants took charge; under the trees Sir Ewain saw a lord, who reclined on a silken cloth, and at his side a maiden, who was reading aloud a romance. Her father and mother had come to listen, for they took delight in beholding her, seeing that other children had they none. She was not yet sixteen, and so fair that the God of Love, if he had seen her, would have loved none other, but wounded himself with his own dart, whose hurt never healeth, unless because of disloyalty; for the man who is otherwise cured hath never loved. When they saw Ewain, the three rose to greet him, and cried: "Fair sir, may you be blest with all that God can perform and command, you and all you hold dear!" The daughter received Sir Ewain gladly, and did him honor, such as was proper; she took his arms, and with her own hands laved his face and neck, at her father's bidding. From her chest she brought a clean shirt and white breeches, and with her needle and thread sewed up the sleeves. To cover the shirt she gave him a good coat, and round his neck hung a mantle of scarlet and vair. She took such pains that the guest was abashed; but she deemed it naught, for she

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knew that her mother would have her neglect nothing wherewith he might be pleased. At supper Sir Ewain was helped with many courses, till the servants grew weary. They bedded him softly, and no man disturbed him, while the lion lay at his feet, according to custom. At morn, when God had lighted, as early as He might, the lamp that doth all at his commandment, Sir Ewain and his host heard mass sung in a little chapel, to the honor of the Holy Ghost.

¶ After the service, Ewain said: "Sir, I must part, if you will give me your leave." "Friend, not yet," returned the master of the house; "in this castle is established a deviltry, which I needs must maintain; hither will I bring two servants, tall and strong, against whom you must take arms; if you defeat them, my daughter will accept you for her lord, and to you shall belong this castle and its honor." "Sir, I would not have it so. Keep your daughter, in whom the Emperor of Germany would be well married, so fair and well-bred is she." "Hush, fair guest, 't is vain, you cannot escape; the victor must have my castle and girl. 'T is cowardice moveth you to refuse my child; know that the knight who here sleepeth may not escape; 't is a custom that hath lasted long; my daughter may not be

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wedded until I see them slain or vanquished." "Then I must do battle, spite of myself." With that, entered the sons of fiends; each carried a staff of cornelwood laden with copper; they were clad in armor from shoulder to knee, with heads and legs bare, and bore round targets, light and strong. When the lion perceived them, he bristled up, and with his tail lashed the earth; but they cried: "Vassal, take your lion, that he may not hurt us; own yourself recreant, and put him where he can do no harm, for he would help you if he could." "Take him away yourselves; I hope he will hurt you, and I like his help!" "It cannot be; you must do your best, one against two; you must remove your lion, however loath." "Where shall I put him?" They pointed out a chamber, and said: "Shut him up there!" "Since you wish it, I will." Ewain took the lion, and locked him up; after that, he called for his arms and steed; they were brought and he mounted.

¶ When they thought themselves safe from the lion, the two servants assailed him, dealing blows that crushed all. Hot with shame and fear, Ewain defended himself, and repaid their charity more freely than it was bestowed. The lion was vexed; he searched about, but found no exit; the sound made him wild; he

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scratched under the door, until he buried himself to the reins. Sir Ewain was pressed, for the miscreants were strong, and the most trenchant sword could not pierce their shields; but he held his ground until the lion broke out and seized one of the two, whom he flung down like a bullock. The other ran to the help of his mate, for he feared the lion more than the lion's master; as he turned and exposed his neck, Ewain dealt such a blow that the head was severed from the trunk, and the wretch lay beside the comrade whom he had meant to rescue. As he fell, he hurt the lion, so that the beast was enraged, and thrust him back, tearing the shoulder, while his club flew from his hand. The other lay still, and said, as well as he could: "Fair sir, take away your lion! Henceforth you may do with me what you will; he who asketh quarter ought not to miss it, unless he find one bare of pity. I will defend myself no longer, and cannot rise; I put myself at your mercy." "Dost thou own that thou art vanquished?" "'T is certain, I confess it." "Then thou hast naught to fear from me, or my lion."

¶ The folk of the castle, with the lord and lady, ran to congratulate him. "Now shall you be our damosel and our lord, and our daughter we give you to wife." "And I," he

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answered, "give her back! Let the man have her who gets her; I say it not in scorn. If it pleaseth you, release your prisoners; their term is ended." "'T is true, and I set them free; but take my daughter, for she is fair and wise; marriage so rich will you never get." "Sir, you know not my errand; if I refuse what none would decline, who hath right to set his heart on a fair maid, be sure that I would take her, if I could receive her or another. Know that this I cannot do, and let me go, for my damsel waiteth, who hath accompanied me hither." "How, fair sir? unless I command, my gate shall not be opened, but you shall stay in my prison. You are insolent, when I ask you to take my daughter, and you disdain her." "Disdain? Not so; yet I may not wed her, nor tarry here; I must follow my guide. Howbeit, if you will, with bare hand I vow, that if I may, I will return and do your pleasure." "Cursed be he who demandeth such promise! If my daughter pleased, you would soon be here, and, methinks, no pledge would hasten your steps. She is not so cheap that I will give her by force. 'T is one to me whether you go or stay."

¶ With that, Sir Ewain departed, taking the prisoners, who deemed themselves rich, poor as they were. Issuing two by two, they made

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as much joy as if the Creator had descended to earth. The folk who had mocked Sir Ewain came to beg his peace; but he answered: "I know not what you mean, and hold you free, for I do not recollect that you have said any harm." They rejoiced in his courtesy, and commended him to God, after they had accompanied him a long way. The damsels took leave, praying that God would give him joy and health, and preserve him in every peril. Impatient to be gone, he answered: "Go, and may God conduct you to your country, safe and happy!"

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The Assize

DAY after day, Sir Ewain and the damsel pursued their journey till they arrived at the castle where lodged the disinherited lady, who by this time had recovered from her sickness. She ran to meet them, and made them what honor she might; on the morrow they took horse, and proceeded until they came to the place where King Arthur had sojourned a fortnight or longer. The damsel who had disinherited her sister had taken lodgings near the court, where she awaited her sister's arrival; she had no fear, for she thought no knight could cope with Sir Gawain. Of the forty days, only one was left; after that had passed, she would have proved her sole right to her father's land. Sir Ewain and his maiden spent the night outside the wall, in an inn little and low, for he wished not to be known; on the morrow, when it dawned, they issued, and waited until it was full day.

¶ Sir Gawain had been absent from court, how many days the story sayeth not; his abode none knew, save only the damsel for whose sake he had engaged to do battle. He had lodged in the neighborhood, at a distance of three leagues or four, and presented himself

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in such array that those who were familiar with him did not recognize his arms. The damsel who had wronged her sister offered him as the knight by whom she would justify her contention, and said to the king: "Sir, time passeth; it will soon be nones, and this is the last day. If my sister came, it would only cause delay; since she is absent, 't is plain that she hath sought in vain, while all the while I have been ready to maintain my right. Now that the victory is mine, 't is just that I enjoy my heritage in peace; my sister I will not accost, so long as she liveth, but she shall continue wretched and poor." The king, who knew that the damsel was disloyal to her sister, answered: "Friend, in the king's court one must wait while the king's justice sitteth; methinks your sister will arrive in time." Before the words were out, the king saw the Knight of the Lion, and the maid who accompanied him; they had stolen away from the lion, and left him at their inn.

¶ When the girl appeared, the king was pleased, and exclaimed: "Fair, advance, and God save you!" At the words, the elder damsel turned; when she saw her sister, she grew darker than earth. The younger came forward, and cried: "May God save the king and his house! King, if my quarrel may be justi-

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fied by any knight, here is the man; much hath he to do, the frank cavalier; but he pitied me so much, that he deferred his own quarrel, for the sake of mine. My lady, my dear sister, whom as my own heart I love, would do well, if she would leave me so much of my right, that there may be peace between us, for I demand nothing that belongeth to her." "Nor I," answered the other, "of thine, for naught shalt thou have; thou mayest wither of grief." The younger responded: "Indeed, it paineth me that two knights so brave should fight in so petty a quarrel, but I cannot yield, my sufferings have been too great; I will thank you, if you will give me what is mine." "Only a dreamer would answer thee! Wicked fire burn me, if I give thee aught to live on! Prime will be noon, and the banks of the Seine meet, if I offer thee not battle!" "Then, God and my right, wherein I trust and have trusted, help the man, who out of charity proffered his aid, although he knew not me, nor I him!"

¶ No more words; the knights were led into the centre of the place, and the folk ran, as they do when fighting is in question. The warriors took ground; had they recognized each other, it would have been matter of kisses, not of blows. So much the worse for

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their shields and helmets, which were dinted and pierced; with the edge of the brand, they dealt great blows, till they grew bruised and black under their mail; hauberks were broken and shields splintered, till on their helms no onyx or emerald was left; their eyes flashed fire, while they smote one another with the swords in their stalwart hands.

¶ They grew weary, and retreated, in order to take repose; but it was not long ere they began anew, and fought more fiercely than before. Those who beheld them cried, that never had they seen two braver knights, and strove to reconcile the sisters; but do what they could, they could not persuade the elder to make peace. Queen Guinevere, with the dames and burgesses, were on the side of the younger, and besought the king, that he would bestow on her the third or fourth of the land, and separate the knights, for it would be shame if one maimed the other, or took away his reputation; but the king said he would not interfere, albeit he cared not for the elder sister, she was such a wicked creature.

¶ All men wondered that the fray was so even, for it could not be told which had the better, while the knights themselves were astonished, and each marvelled who his enemy could be. Both grew weak, and in many places the blood

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streamed over the mail; each thought that he had found his match at last; they paused, for they feared one another, and the falling of the dark night.

¶ Sir Ewain, in his courtesy, was first to speak, but his friend knew not his voice, for it was low and hoarse, and his blood was troubled by the blows he had taken. "Sir, night approacheth; if darkness separate us, neither is in fault. On my part, I fear and honor you, for never did I encounter a knight I so longed to know." "By my faith," returned Sir Gawain, "you are not so hard bested, but I am more so; you have returned my loan with usury; since it pleaseth you to know the name by which I am called, it shall not be concealed; I am Gawain, son of Lot." At these words, Sir Ewain was dismayed, and flung away his bloody sword and broken shield; he dismounted and cried: "Alas! Had I known you, I would have been called recreant, sooner than have stricken a blow." "How? Who are you?" "I am that Ewain, who love you better than any on the round earth; always have you honored me, and done me service in many courts. But I will make amends, and confess myself vanquished." "This will you do for me? I should be hard-hearted, to accept such an offer; this honor shall not be mine, but

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your own." "Fair sir, say not so! I cannot stand, so worsted am I." "I too am overcome; I speak not to flatter; there is no confession I would not make, to escape your assault." The knights embraced one another, while each declared himself conquered.

¶ The king and the barons ran up in wonder: "Sirs," cried the king, "tell us, what hath made such amity between you, who have contended all day long?" "Sir, hear the mistake, which hath brought about this encounter; I, Gawain, your nephew, did not recognize my comrade Sir Ewain, till he, God's mercy, asked my name. Had the battle lasted longer, it would have gone hard with me; by my head, he would have slain me, through his own prowess, and the wrong of the lady who hath brought me to the field. Yet 't is better that my friend hath conquered me, than that he had slain me." Sir Ewain's blood boiled, and he cried: "Fair sweet sir, so help me God, you do wrong thus to speak! Let the king my master know, 't is I who am recreant in this fray." "No, I," "No, I," cried each, while both desired to disclaim the victory.

¶ The king put an end to the battle: "Sirs," he said, "between you is great affection! you prove it, when each confesseth himself vanquished. Trust me, and I will arrange in

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such manner, that forever may the tale be told, to your honor, and mine." They promised to accept his judgment, and the king cried: "Where is the merciless damsel, who disinheriteth her sister?" "Sir, 't is I." "You? I was certain, that you had deprived her of her heritage; henceforth her right shall be unquestioned, for your own lips have confessed it." "Sir!" she exclaimed, "I have spoken a silly word, which ought not to be taken to the letter! In God's name, oppress me not! You are a king, 't is your duty to protect your subjects from error and oppression." "For that very reason I desire to preserve for your sister the heirship she justly claimeth. Yourself have heard, how your knight and hers have put themselves at my mercy; I will not speak as you would have me do, for your wrong is clear. To honor the other, each knight saith he hath been vanquished in battle. Since it dependeth on me, you must agree to obey my decision, or I will affirm that my nephew hath been conquered in arms, and your case will be worse." This said the king, not that he meant so to do, but to alarm the damsel, in order that of her own free will she might abandon the claim. She answered: "Fair dear sir, I must needs do your pleasure, though it be with a sad heart.

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However it paineth me, my sister shall have her share; for security, I offer myself as hostage." "Invest her forthwith," replied the king; "let her become your woman, and hold of you; love her as your tenant, and she you as her liege lady and sister!" Thus the maiden was seized of her land, and returned thanks.

¶ The king bade the knights disarm; meantime, the lion came leaping to seek his master, and when he found him, was very glad. The boldest retreated, but Sir Ewain cried: "Why do you fly? None pursueth. Be not afraid of this lion; know that he is mine, and I his, for we are dear comrades." They knew he spake truth, for they had heard of the lion and the knight, who had destroyed the giant; and Sir Gawain said: "Comrade, so God aid me, ill have I requited the service you did me, when you slew the giant for my nephews and my niece! I was anxious, because I was told, that between us was acquaintance and love; but the truth I could not guess, for I never heard the Knight of the Lion called by his proper name."

¶ So speaking, they laid down their arms, while the lion showed his joy, after the manner of dumb beasts. The knights were carried to hospital, for they needed a physician; the king sent a surgeon, who knew more of

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the healing art than any other, who cared for them and healed their wounds.

¶ When they had recovered, Sir Ewain, who had set his heart on affection, saw that he could not endure, but must die of love, unless his lady should have mercy. Alone he determined to depart, and proceed to the dangerous fountain, where he would bring about such tempest and rain, that she would be forced to make peace, or forever be tormented by wind and storm.

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Forgiveness

EWAIN and his lion departed, and roved until they came to the fountain, where he poured out the water, and caused rain and tempest. The gale was so furious, that the tenth part could not be told; the forest seemed about to sink into the abyss, and the lady of the castle feared that it would fall into ruin; the walls shook and the tower rocked, as if it would crumble away; the knights of the castle would rather have been prisoners among the Turks, than shut up in the hold. In terror they blamed their forefathers, and exclaimed: "Accursed be the man, who first built in this country, and they who founded this castle! In the world is no place so hateful, where one man can torment us so!"

¶ Lunetta went to her mistress, and cried: "Lady, 't is you who must decide what is to be done; you will seek far, ere you will find succor. We shall neither be able to remain here, nor pass beyond our gates. If all your knights were convened, you know well, that the bravest could accomplish nothing." Her lady answered: "Thou who managest everything, tell me what to do, and I will follow your counsel." "Lady, if I could, I would

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advise you; but you need a counsellor more reasonable than myself. If it please God, I will endure the storm, until at your court I see some brave man, who will undertake the battle; but I think it will not be to-day, the worse for your comfort." "Damsel, speak not of my knights, for in them I have no hope. Let us hear what you have in mind; the proverb saith: A friend in need is a friend indeed." "Lady, if one could find the man who slew the giant, and vanquished the three knights, it would be well; but so long as he brooketh the anger of his lady, he will serve neither man nor woman, unless he causeth them first to swear that they will do their best to reconcile her wrath, which is so great, that he dieth of the pain." Her mistress said: "Before you go, I am ready to pledge myself that in so far as dependeth on me, I will do all in my power to bring about his peace." Lunetta responded: "Lady, you can, if you will; refuse not to swear, for I must take your oath ere I put myself on the way."

℄ Lunetta brought out a precious sanctuary, and her lady knelt before it. "Lady," she cried, "raise your hand! After to-morrow, blame not me; 't is not for my own sake thus I do. Swear, if you will, for the sake of the Knight of the Lion, that you will take pains

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with sincere forethought, to procure him the good-will of his lady, even as aforetime it was his own." Laudinè held up her right hand, and declared: "As thou hast said, I promise, so help me God and the Saints, that with unfeigning heart, I shall do all in my power, to restore him the love and grace that erst of his lady he possessed, if ability be mine."

¶ Thus had Lunetta succeeded in accomplishing what she had most at heart. They brought out a gently ambling palfrey; she mounted and rode, until underneath the pine-tree she discovered the man of whom she was in quest; she recognized him by the lion, and sped that way; when she arrived, she dismounted, alighting on the firm ground. As far off as he could see, Sir Ewain knew her; she saluted him, and exclaimed: "Sir, I rejoice to have found you here!" "How, is it I whom you seek?" "Aye, and since my birth I never was so glad; to this pass have I brought my lady, that if she wisheth not to perjure herself, she must become your lady, and you her lord, as in time before; 't is truth I tell." Sir Ewain was overjoyed by news he had never hoped to hear; he could not make enough of her, and said: "Indeed, sweet friend, I can never repay you! Strength and will fail me, to do you honor and service." "Sir," she

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answered, "fear not, you will have time and means to serve myself and others. If I have done my duty, I deserve no more than is due to one who payeth an obligation; I think I have not yet satisfied my debt." "Indeed you have, a hundred fold; if it pleaseth you, we will set out. Have you told them who I am?" "By my faith, no! You are only known as the Knight of the Lion."

¶ In converse they proceeded, and the lion followed, as usual, until they came to the castle, and said naught to man or woman, before they stood in the presence of the lady. Armed as he was, Sir Ewain threw himself at her feet, while at his side Lunetta exclaimed: "Lady, command him to rise, and do your best to procure the peace and forgiveness which, save yourself, none can purchase!" With that, Laudinè bid him stand, and said: "My means are at his command; I would I might be able to do his pleasure." "Lady," answered the damsel, "say not so, if it be not the truth." "'T is in your power, more than I have said; listen to me; so good a friend as yonder knight have you never possessed; God, who willeth that between you twain should be fair peace and dear love, hath enabled me to find him. No more is needed to prove me right; lady, remit your ire! he hath no lady,

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other than yourself; 't is Sir Ewain, your husband."

¶ At these words, Laudinè leapt to her feet, and cried: "So save me God, you have taken me in a fine snare! In my own despite, you will compel me to receive a man, who doth not love me or care for me! You have done me a brave service. I would rather brook wind and storm, all my life! If it were not wicked to be forsworn, of me should he get no peace nor concord! As fire in the ashes, so in mine heart brooded the anger, that henceforth I will not remember, since I must needs forgive!"

¶ Sir Ewain saw that his fortune had taken a fair turn, and cried: "Lady, 't is right to have mercy on the sinner. My madness hath cost me dear; madness it was that kept me absent, and made me guilty. 'T was bold to dare present myself here; if you will keep me now, I will never offend again." "Indeed, I must, for I should be perjured, did I not do my best to make our peace! If you wish it, I grant it." "Lady, thousand mercies! So aid me the Holy Spirit, as God, in this mortal life, could bestow on me no other joy!"

¶ Thus Sir Ewain was forgiven, and naught had ever made him so happy. He had come to a good termination, for he was loved by his lady and she by himself. His sorrows he

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remembered no longer, but forgot them in the content he had of his sweet friend. Lunetta was at her ease; she had obtained the desire of her heart, since she had made peace between Sir Ewain and his dear love.

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